

APRIL 2016
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NO BORING CARS



30th

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

LUX
HI
We put
audio
to t

WE REPRISE OUR ORIGINAL MR2 MEETS 308 COVER STORY, RECONNECT WITH THE INFAMOUS P.J. O'ROURKE, AND REMINISCE ABOUT THE BEST AND WORST OF THE PAST THREE DECADES

VW GOLF GTI & MAZDA MX-5 MIATA

Why two of our all-time favorites remain at the top of their game

+ALL-NEW VOLVO S90 SEDAN

Plain but pretty Scandinavian design

LUXURY HI-FI

We put high-end
audio systems
to the test



TEN THE
ENTHUSIAST
NETWORK™

THE TALE OF THE
2017 VOLT

AS TOLD FROM AN ENGINEERING AND DESIGN PERSPECTIVE.

We sat down with Executive Chief Engineer Pamela Fletcher and Executive Director of Global Design John Cafaro to talk about the engineering and design innovation that went into creating the revolutionary next-generation Volt.





PAMELA FLETCHER

CHEVROLET EXECUTIVE CHIEF ENGINEER
ELECTRIFIED VEHICLES

What are some of the technological breakthroughs in the next-generation Volt?

Customers tell us they love range, so we wanted to give them more range. We've fine-tuned the aerodynamics and drag coefficient, resulting in up to 53 miles of pure electric range,¹ nearly 40 percent more than the first-generation Volt. The new Voltec propulsion system optimizes two new motors for prime power delivery, while increasing efficiency. Volt offers up to 420 miles of total range,¹ without having to stop and plug in. The improvement in fuel economy and EV range will save time otherwise spent at the pump, as we expect owners to go over 1,000 miles between fill-ups by charging regularly,¹ providing a more convenient driving experience for our customers.

“Customers tell us they love range, so we wanted to give them more range.”

Pamela Fletcher

CHEVROLET EXECUTIVE CHIEF ENGINEER, ELECTRIFIED VEHICLES



JOHN CAFARO

CHEVROLET EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GLOBAL DESIGN

How did you approach exterior design for the next-generation Volt?

When we started putting pencil to paper on the Volt, we wanted something exciting-looking. We knew it was going to have four doors, but we really wanted something sleek with a coupe aesthetic. The biggest change from Gen I to Gen II from an exterior standpoint is that the car's just got a lot more attitude. We spent 340 hours in the wind tunnel, validating and tuning the exterior surface like you might tune a guitar, dialing in the notes just perfectly so they sound right. There is this hint of something beautiful and functional about the car's new shape. We made the next-generation Volt more dynamic and more gestured. It's eco with an attitude.

What interior enhancements have you designed into the vehicle?

We added richer materials throughout the interior, so it's more sculpted, swept and has a lot more movement. We also made the controls more intuitive and added advanced phone integration technology. Apple CarPlay^{TM3} compatibility allows you to conveniently access select iPhone[®] apps on the Chevrolet MyLink touch-screen.⁴ And new for 2017, we will provide Android Auto^{TM3} compatibility, so you can access select phone apps in a smart, simple way. Chevrolet design has evolved through the years and we're looking at things totally differently. We're taking some risks along the way, but that's what makes life exciting.



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Jake Holmes

Bring the Noise

Factory audio is more advanced and powerful than ever before. We put eight of today's top high-end setups to the test to see which one sounds the best, and detail how Bose and Cadillac worked together to develop the new, 34-speaker Panaray system.

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Basem Wasef

Sky's the Limit

We fly the friendly skies with the daring Breitling Jet Team to learn more about the relationship between Bentley and the luxe watchmaker, which is highlighted by a special, limited edition Continental GT Speed.

30 Years of Automobile Magazine

Thousands of vehicles and who-knows-how-many miles driven, bright and dark days, dedicated readers, and stories from the best in the business. We celebrate what got us to where we are today.

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD



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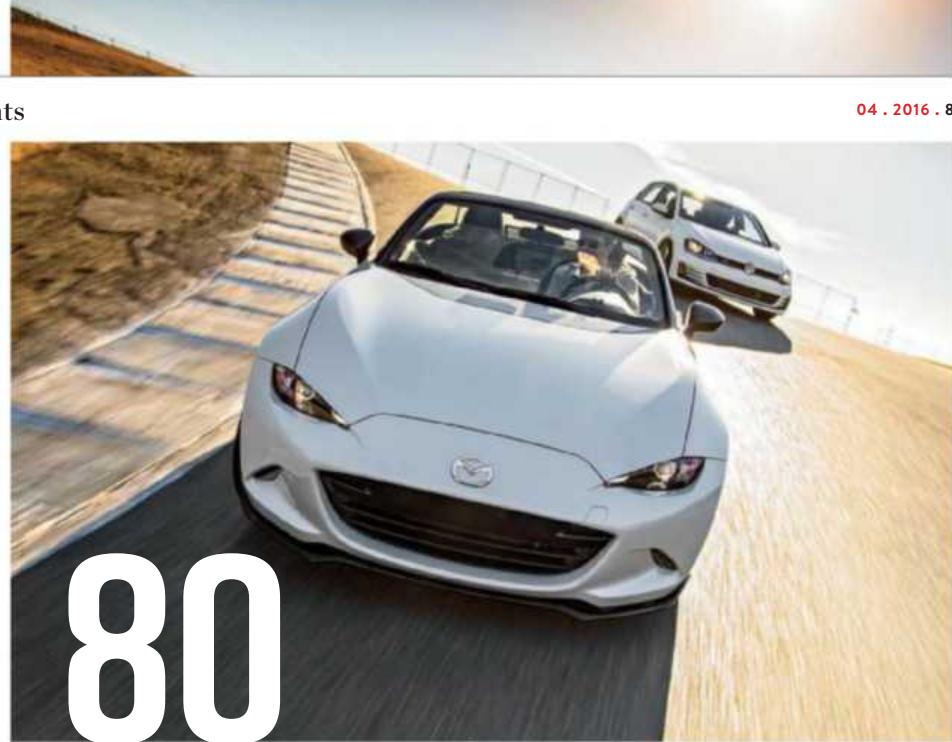
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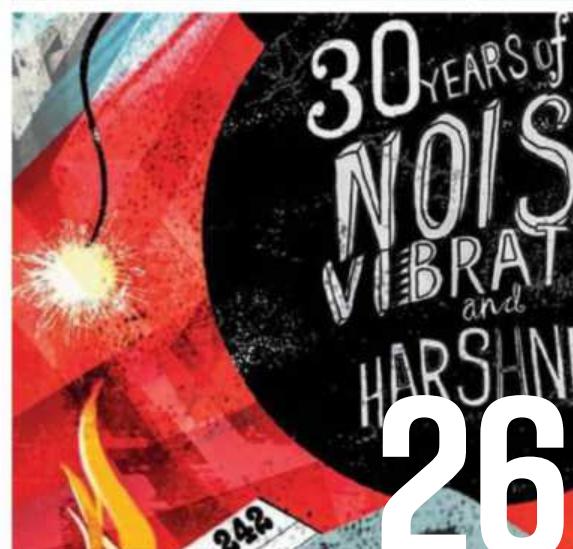
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Never before have two models earned more awards, received more applause, or better exemplified our motto, "No Boring Cars."

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P.J. O'Rourke tells us what he would do with a free Porsche 918 Spyder.

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Editor-In-Chief MICHAEL FLOYD

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CA 90245; 310.531.9900

Mark Dewey: Bruce Kukuk; Chuck Miller;
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Daily News Editors JOSEPH CAPPARELLA,
CONNER GOLDEN, JAKE HOLMES, ERIC WEINER
Production Editor ELEONOR SEGURA

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

RONALD AHRENS, JASON H. HARPER,
DAVE KINNEY, JOHN LAMM, PRESTON LERNER,
BOB MERLIS, LAWRENCE ULRICH, STEVEN COLE SMITH

MANUFACTURING & PRODUCTION OPERATIONS

VP Manufacturing & Ad Operations GREG PARRELL
Senior Director Ad Operations PAULINE ATWOOD
Archivist THOMAS VOEHRINGER

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

TIM ANDREW, MARK BRAMLEY, DANIEL BYRNE,
JIM FETS, MARTYN GODDARD,
STEFFEN JAHN, ROBERT KERIAN,
CHARLIE MAGEE, TIM MARRS, A. J. MUELLER,
MARK OLIVER, TOM SALT, JÜRGEN SKARWAN,
ANDREW TRAHAN, ANDREW YEADON

EDITORIAL OFFICES

831 S. DOUGLAS STREET
EL SEGUNDO, CALIFORNIA 90245
310.531.9900

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ADVERTISING

Associate General Manager,

In-Market Network MARIA JAMISON

VP Digital Media JASON RICE

Marketing Director SHAWN HIGGINS

Advertising Coordinator CHRISTY TRYON

TEN: THE ENTHUSIAST NETWORK, LLC

Chairman PETER ENGLEHART

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EVP Operations KEVIN MULLAN

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SVP Digital Operations DAN BEDNAR

SVP & GM, Automotive Aftermarket MATT BOICE

SVP Financial Planning MIKE CUMMINGS

SVP Automotive Digital GEOFF DEFRENCE

VP Editorial Operations AMY DIAMOND

SVP Content Strategy, Automotive DAVID FREIBURGER

SVP Digital, Sports & Entertainment GREG MORROW

VP Digital Monetization ELISABETH MURRAY

SVP Marketing RYAN PAYNE

EVP Mind Over Eye BILL WADSWORTH

**CONSUMER MARKETING, ENTHUSIAST MEDIA
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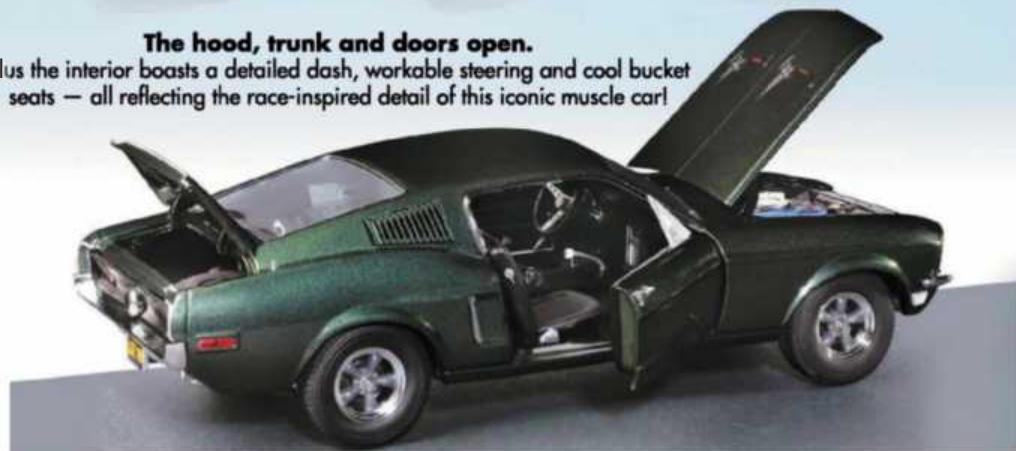


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EDITOR'S LETTER



VOLUME 31 . NO.1 . APRIL 2016

A

PRIL 1986 WAS A GOOD MONTH FOR ME.

I was about to graduate from Troy High School in suburban Detroit. I had just been accepted to Michigan State University. The rebuild of my 1970 Chevy Nova was almost complete.

And—though I had no way of knowing its future impact on my life at the time—*Automobile* was born.

In retrospect, there were signs. Like many Motor City kids of that era, I was baptized into the Church of the Almighty Muscle Car. My friends and I all rolled in rides from the golden era of the late '60s and '70s. Chevys, Mopars, and Mustangs—even the occasional AMC. Almost all of our parents worked for one of The Big Three in some capacity or another. Yes, it was the beginning of the end of Detroit dictating what America drove, though no one really knew it yet.

My first ever car was a 1973 Plymouth Satellite, but I wrecked it when I spent a few seconds too long fiddling with the cassette deck and smacked into the back of a Suburban. Naturally I went looking for something faster, meaner.

What I found was a hulking shell of a Nova I bought for \$500. I spent many a day and night helping my cousin Steve turn it from a steaming pile to a gleaming machine that could lay down one hell of a smoky burnout, its ladder bars keeping the rear wheels from hopping all over the pavement.

Rebuilding the car with Steve is something I will never forget—though he deserves most of the credit (I'm forever in your debt, my man). I felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment when it was finally finished and a thrill cruising with friends on a Friday night. Or rolling into the Troy High parking lot, the glorious noise from the 350-cubic-inch V-8 announcing my arrival.

Meanwhile, at an office building in downtown Ann Arbor about 45 minutes west of me, David E. Davis Jr. and his team were working on building their own masterpiece: the inaugural edition of *Automobile*. Creating something from the ground up, flipping through that printed copy for the first time, must have been its own tremendously thrilling accomplishment.

Ronald Ahrens, who still contributes to *Automobile*, was there 30 years ago as an associate editor and worked on the first issue.

"Everybody felt they were doing something important and innovative and helping the great man to realize his vision," Ronald recalled. "But many things went wrong, like the sedan comparison we did in southern Ohio, where we encountered heavy snow. The whole project was scrapped. And more than one person struggled to do his or her job. Some of us had never used computers until then."

A GREAT ADVENTURE

He remembers the first issue for its purple cover, "crazy logo," and wild shootout between a Toyota MR2 and a Ferrari 308 (a story reprised as part of our extensive 30th anniversary coverage in this issue).

"I can't recall exultation as the first issue shipped; the atmosphere had been tense," Ronald added. "Holding the first issue was rewarding, though. ... David liked to use the expression 'make a big splat on the wall,' and we felt we had done it."

When I laid my eyes on the September 2014 issue of *Automobile*, my first as editor, I felt that same rewarding feeling, a true sense of pride I've only experienced a few times in my life, like the day I rumbled out of the garage in the Nova for the first time. And like the rebuild of that car, I am happy to be in the trenches, but others—namely this incredible *Automobile* staff—deserve the real credit for rolling out that issue and all the ones that follow.

Automobile has driven down a long and winding road for three decades, and I'm lucky to have some time at the wheel. I'd like to thank the people who have supported all of us on this exhausting, rewarding, and "great automotive adventure," as David E. put it in his opening column.

Most of all though, I want to thank all of you—the folks who have stuck with us since that April '86 issue, the others who have hopped in along the way. I'd love to know what you'd like to see more (or less of, for that matter) from us as we shape the future of *Automobile*, both here and in the digital world.

Also in his first column, David E. wrote, "We're determined to produce a quality product for a quality audience." While the cars, many names and faces, and the way we bring it all to you have changed, 30 years later we're as committed as ever to living up to his mantra.

Fire off your thoughts and favorite 30th anniversary memories to: letters@automobilemag.com

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Not yet Botoxed like the 575M, available exclusively with a click-clack manual transmission, the creamiest \$100K-plus slide powered by a 12-cylinder engine, this is the F12 of the '90s.

/ The Deep Dive

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Years Behind the Wheel

Welcome to my secret dreams and disasters department, wherein I've taken the occasion of *Automobile*'s 30th anniversary to catalog my personal list of best and worst cars I've not only driven during the past four decades in this business, but also the ones I've owned. In other words, 30 years of automotive euphoria and depression, as seen through a pair of glasses from a 6-foot-8-inch vantage point conceived in Austria.





Best Coupe/Convertible: BENTLEY CONTINENTAL SUPERSPORTS

Forget the hideous 2015 Conti GT3-R. The real McCoy is the 2011 Supersports conceived by Paefgen & Eichhorn. Raw power, laser-sharp handling, fast-rewind brakes. Heavy, but what a car!

Georg Kacher



Best SUV: MERCEDES-BENZ G-WAGEN

If Putin, Obama, or Assad should ever push the wrong button, this is just about the only vehicle to bring you and your family a crucial step closer to uncontaminated food and water. In style.



Best Full-Size Sedan:

MASERATI QUATTROPORTE

A decent used one costs peanuts, has more street cred than a new Ghibli, sounds like a forgotten aria by Puccini, handles with the same spiciness as the coupe, and still is a cosseting statement of good taste.



Best Compact Car: VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI MKVII

Yesterday, this was Mitsubishi Evo and Subaru WRX territory. Tomorrow, this turf might belong to the new Ford Focus RS. But right now, nothing beats the Golf GTI. Except, perhaps, the even quicker Golf R.

Best Arcane Sports Car:

BRISTOL 408

Panel beaten from thin aluminum, chrome-plated brass, a cabin so beautiful you could lock me in and throw away the key, a very special driving experience lauded by LJK Setright, hero of my youth.



Best Arcane Compact Car:

RENAULT MÉGANE RS MKI

Not a great looker but the most involving hot hatch of its decade. Drove it on the Nordschleife and loved it, despite scaring myself witless. "Never Lift" was written all over its curved rear window.



Worst Regular Sports Car:

SHELBY SERIES 1

Even with Carroll himself in the driver's seat and carte blanche from Nevada state troopers, this was an itchy, twitchy bitch. The pseudo-retro looks were way off the mark, too. One to forget.



Best Arcane SUV:

MONTEVERDI SAFARI

Born as the International Harvester Scout, this oddball rarity has been sculpted by a Swiss skin doctor named Peter Monteverdi. The outcome is proper old-school coachbuilding, blending reliability and exclusivity.

Best Arcane Full-Size Sedan:

ISO FIDIA

Designed by Giugiaro and engineered by Bizzarrini, the Fidia was the nonconformist's alternative to the Quattroporte.

Best Arcane Coupe Convertible:

CORD 812 SC PHAETON

Those were the days when function followed form, from the streamlined grille over the concealed headlamps to the jewel instruments and the out-of-this-world materials. It also drives well, sort of.



Worst Coupe/Convertible: TOYOTA PASEO

Why the Paseo? Because it looks boring, drives like an anonymous transportation appliance, and scores a big fat zero on the must-have scale. In other words, a typical yawn-a-mile, mid-'90s Toyota.



Worst Full-Size Sedan: MITSUBISHI DEBONAIR AMG

When everything was still solid between Daimler and Mitsubishi, AMG created this yakuza-friendly battleship with wheel spats and spoilers, presumably for a lifetime supply of cheap sake.

Worst Arcane Sports Car: VECTOR M12

VECTOR M12

Jerry Wiegert's M12 could have been the new Knight Rider. It had the looks, the space-age cockpit, and the stats to dwarf any Ferrari. Shame most of the promising genes were lost in translation.



Worst Compact Car: SMART FORTWO

SMART FORTWO

Call me ignorant, but unless you are a city slicker, the Fortwo is little more than a high-performance double-seater wheelchair with airbags. Try it in winter, on the autobahn, or through crosswinds. Not.



Worst Arcane Coupe/Convertible: BMW 3200 CS

Design by Bertone, check. Technology by BMW, check. So far, so good. But please don't drive it. The big coupe feels as ponderous as the sedans—vague steering, poor brakes, and hopeless handling.



Worst SUV: SSANGYONG RODIUS

Ken Greenley, former head of RCA design, must have been strapped for cash. How else could you explain the rear end of this semi-hearse that should have been banned from driving in daylight?



Worst Arcane SUV: LAFORZA 5.0, AKA RAYTON FISSORE MAGNUM

Quality is a fickle thing. Just ask the Italian police who were burdened with Magnum cop cars. When U.S. assembly began in 1993, the self-titled Range Rover rival was already dead in the water.



Worst Arcane Compact Car: YUGO 45L

Slobodan Zastava's Fiat clones built in the former Yugoslavia were kind of OK, but the 45L was the beginning of the end. Poorly made and engineered, it steered the brand straight to bankruptcy.

Worst Arcane Full-Size Sedan: MONICA 560

Another futile attempt to achieve stardom by fusing a Detroit V-8 with a chic Euro-style wrapping. Great shape, lovely interior. But you could not get parts, and corrosion was Monica's best friend.

Owned:



Worst Sports Car:

2004 PORSCHE 996 TURBO CABRIOLET TIPTRONIC

The wife wanted a convertible. The wife needed a two-pedal layout. The wife drove the damn thing only twice. The rest of the time, hubby was stuck with the wrong bodystyle and the wrong gearbox.



Best SUV:

2015 RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8

If your driver's license is hanging by a thread, try the RR to calm you down and give torque priority over power. The Sport is heavy and does not ride well, but it is an unbeatable rush-hour cocoon.



Best Coupe/Convertible:

2003 BMW M3

The paddle-shift cars were a curse, but the manual six-speeder was as good a man-machine-interface as the slick steering, the bull's-eye brakes, and the sweet engine. New M4? Thanks, but no thanks.

Best Sports Car: 2010 NISSAN GT-R

True, it blew its engine after only 9,000 miles, the grinding diff woke up the neighbors in winter, and parts were priced for millionaires. But at the time, it beat everything. I repeat, everything.



Best Compact Car:

1974 BMW 2000TII TOURING

Mine was Reseda Green metallic, had an electric sunroof, and I loved it. In the '70s, 130 horsepower was no mean feat, and the handling was crisp enough to justify sick bags in the passenger door pocket.



Best Full-Size Sedan:

1991 MERCEDES-BENZ 500E

Shame they didn't paint them taxi beige, which would have maximized the stealth appeal. Hard to tell apart from a dopey 200D at a glance, this oversexed underdog ate 911s for breakfast.



Georg Kacher

**Worst SUV:**
2001 RANGE ROVER**4.6 HSE**

Joe Lucas, prince of darkness and purveyor of smoke-producing wiring, had cast his spell on our Range Rover, which developed all kinds of electrical eccentricities. Come to think of it, it was also a dog to drive.

Worst Coupe/Convertible:**2003 MERCEDES-BENZ CLK55**
AMG CABRIOLET

Mistake No. 1: At the age of 51, I bought a car designed for geriatrics. Mistake No. 2: It was a convertible.

Mistake No. 3: With Germany's thirstiest V-8.

Result: A truly forgettable AMG effort.

**Worst Compact Car:****1973 ALFA ROMEO ALFASUD TI**

Previously owned by my father, this Soylent Green curse started rusting the day I registered it in my name. After less than three years, I traded her in and she went straight to the shredder.

**Worst Full-Size Sedan:****1969 PEUGEOT 404**
INJECTION

"Timing case cover" became the catchword for our disease-ridden bronze beauty with almond leather seats and a sunroof. Not to mention crankshaft imbalance and vomiting brake hydraulics. ■



VICTORY IS SWEDE.



And sweet, too. Because winning the **2016 Motor Trend SUV of the Year®** award is an accomplishment that makes us, at Volvo, extremely proud. Especially considering every single part on the all-new 2016 XC90 was completely redesigned. A feat that didn't come easy, but definitely paid off.

Planned Obsolescence

HELMETS

Alain Prost won the 1986 Formula 1 championship wearing a **Bell XFM-1**, one very similar to the white helmet here, which is still sold as part of Bell's Classic series. The XFM-1 was one of the first auto racing helmets to have a lightweight carbon-composite shell and a fire-retardant interior. The aerodynamically shaped **Bell HP7** worn by reigning Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton meets the FIA's latest "super helmet" standard with high-strength carbon-fiber construction, titanium hardware, an optical-quality fogless visor, and a slew of air ducts for cooling.



VIDEO GAMES

In 1986 Sega released **OutRun**, an arcade game that put the player behind the wheel of a Ferrari Testarossa. Believe it or not, OutRun was pretty snappy for its time, what with modern hardware and, uh, dazzling graphics. Today there's **Forza Motorsport 6** for Xbox One, in which a player can choose from 460 cars—including more than 30 Ferraris—and drive around 26 different tracks, all from the comfort of the couch. And, yes, Forza's graphics are a little bit better than OutRun's.

OUTRUN: CONOR LAWLESS

RADAR DETECTORS

Escort Radar launched in 1978 under the name Cincinnati Microwave Inc. and made its reputation with the **original Passport radar detector** in the early '80s. Featuring X- and K-band detection capability, the \$295 unit was one of the best radar detectors on the market. Though Cincinnati Microwave later went bankrupt, it came back to life in the late '90s under the Escort name. Today's \$650 **Max 360** has Bluetooth connectivity, a GPS-based "false alert" system, and detection for X-band, K-band, Ka-band, Ka-POP, and laser through its front- and rear-mounted radar receivers.



HOW HAVE CAR TECHNOLOGY AND CONSUMER GOODS EVOLVED SINCE THE MID-'80S?



12V CHARGING

The 12-volt, in-car power outlet, originally designed to heat the metal coils inside of a **cigarette lighter**, has stuck around even though a lot of automotive manufacturers don't even offer cigarette lighters anymore. Most people use 12-volt outlets to power USB adapters, such as this \$25, two-port **REVOLT pro** model from Scosche, assuming their car doesn't already have standard USB ports. (Remember, smoking kills, but so does texting while driving.)

LIGHTER / ADAPTER: JORGE NUNEZ

STEERING WHEELS

The simple three-spoke steering wheel in **Ayrton Senna's McLaren MP4/4 Formula 1 car** had two buttons: a green one to turn on the radio and a red one to give the car's turbocharged Honda V-6 a bit more kick during overtakes. The steering wheel in current F1 cars, such as this one from **Jenson Button's McLaren MP4/29** with its turbocharged Mercedes V-6 from the 2014 racing season, features a large LCD display, an LED rev counter, and a whole lot of colorful buttons that control pit lane speed, increase passing speed, control energy recovery, and the like.



TIRES

"Thirty years of tire development is equivalent to eons of human evolution," says Woody Rogers, product information specialist at Tire Rack. Continental in 1986 sold the **SuperContact CV41**, a "high-performance tire for the high demands of drivers of powerful, fast cars with speeds in excess of 121 mph." Hell, now a 74-hp Mitsubishi Mirage can almost hit that speed. A tire today, like Continental's high-performance **ExtremeContact DW**, "delivers high-speed capability, dry and wet traction, and wear life [at speeds up to 186 mph] that were unimaginable back then," according to Rogers.



VOLVO S90

Plain but pretty



ve always liked Volvos despite their clunky appearance, and I have owned several including, half a century ago, what was the fastest Volvo in the world. True, it required a Ford 289 V-8 heart transplant, but the basic car was more than strong enough to allow doubling its power safely. Solidity and safety have long been Volvo touchstones, though quality seemed to decline somewhat during the last Ford ownership years. Now backed by Chinese capital, Volvo's engineers and designers have begun a rational consolidation program in which models will be based on simplified platforms with similar mechanical packages. Given that Volvo once had four-, five-, six-, and eight-cylinder engines sourced from Ford, Renault, Yamaha, and

even diesels from VW at the same time as well as multiple in-house designs, this makes great sense. Adding turbos, superchargers, and electric motors to the basic 2.0-liter four allows impressive performance over a wide range, and the overall simplification makes real sense.

In 2013, Volvo's then-new design team, led by German ex-Audi and Škoda designer Thomas Ingenlath, with interior design headed up by Briton Robin Page, formerly at Rolls-Royce and Bentley, evolved a single design that fits all vehicle categories. We've all seen families in which all the children are recognizably the same, even if one's a strapping young man and another is a tiny 5-year-old girl. And this is really a single new design, not a collection of agreed design

cues as used by some other manufacturers to link disparate products in the public mind. All these new Volvos—the Concept Coupe, Concept Estate, Concept XC Coupe, XC90 crossover, and S90 sedan—are identical in almost all points of detail but have been morphed subtly into different sizes and configurations. It's interesting that two foreigners have so perfectly internalized Swedish design sensibility, eschewing the external surface complexity so beloved by Japanese carmakers and hewing to traditional Swedish concepts of simplicity and understatement.

This one design is certainly agreeable, if a bit restrained, presumably exactly what Volvo desired. It will be a few years before we know for sure if it is

dynamic enough to sustain an ongoing, profitable future operation. Nice as this design is, it will have to transmute into something else in no more than seven years, which is about the maximum practical life for a given set of production tools. Or car shapes. Can Volvo revise and update its entire lineup with proceeds from selling this version? It's a critical question, the answer to which will determine the continued existence or total extinction of what on the face of it was an improbable situation in the '60s: a small country with about the population of New York City making inroads into the American car market with not one but two (Saab) distinct and different brands. But remember, both went broke doing so.

FRONT 3/4 VIEW

1. This is by far the nicest grille any Volvo has ever sported. Its multiple concave vertical bars are spaced nicely, the perimeter is clean and not overly simple, and the diagonal slash through the badge goes right back to the beginning in 1927.
2. The vertical placement of the grille allows a long hood, made more apparent by the sharply chamfered corners in plan view.
3. This crisp line emerges from a rounded surface then continues to a sharp intersection with an equally hard transverse line at the peak of the rear fascia that acts as a spoiler.
4. The windshield slope is the most extreme Volvo has used on a mainstream car, and it flows into a very long and graceful roof.
5. The sharp longitudinal line separates an inverse curve above and a gently swelling convex surface below, which in turn flows into a concave area on the doors.
6. The diagonal line up from the window sill to a short vertical element leading to the perimeter loop around the side glass recall the similar bend at the bottom of the grille.
7. This depressed area on the sides gives extra prominence to a slightly rising chrome strip along the body's bottom.
8. The eight-spoke wheels seem a little too much like the wooden ones of a Conestoga wagon.
9. A great deal of subtle modeling is involved in these lower corner scoops, crisp at their outer edges, flowing

softly into the horizontal brightwork above the very low-mounted lamps.

10. The bottom-feeder catfish mouth is emphasized by the horizontal blade running the full width of the front end.

REAR 3/4 VIEW

11. Here you see how sharply the front end is cut back in plan view and how far around the corner the transverse blade extends.
12. The headlamp assembly wraps well around into the body side, good for safety as the turn signals can be seen from the side as well as the front.
13. The fender swells out gently to embrace the vertical plane of the wheel opening, defined by an indent around the perimeter top.
14. Admirably slim, the A-pillars are much more in the mode of sports cars than family sedans, supplying unusual grace to the S90's profile.
15. Substantial B-pillars are blacked out to be quietly self-effacing, as is the case for the C-pillars. Very nice.
16. The swelling of the body sides into the wheel opening starts well forward in the rear door skin and continues well aft, almost into the taillight assembly.
17. The hard intersection of this transverse line with the side line is a little surprising, but the line it creates traverses the taillight lens and sweeps across the back, making a clear break between side and rear.
18. Beneath that sweeping line, the rear flows quite softly into the sides.
19. The exhaust outlets are framed in chrome, and their substantial size alludes to the great amount of power in



the full-on supercharged/turbocharged/plug-in-hybrid version.

20. These surface breaks—the upper one aligned with the side chrome trim and much crisper than the lower—connect the sides and the rear fascia with visual emphasis on overall length.
21. The lower sill seems to be a very straightforward constant section, but it is carefully sculpted for the transitions into the wheel openings.
22. Light-colored wood has long been an important part of Scandinavian interior decorating, and its application here with generous radii at the top edges evokes that tradition.
23. Notice the round Volvo emblem is well below the steering wheel rim's geometric center, allowing good instrument visibility.
24. This is definitely not a quarter-million-dollar clock from Bentley.
25. The nav screen is usefully large, and the vertical orientation easier to read than a horizontal one.
26. The theme of vertical chrome-flashes with central button is carried across the width of the instrument panel.
27. The handsome blond Nappa leather upholstery carries out the home-interior theme perfectly.
28. Door storage bins are practically capacious but probably won't accommodate a bottle of water, as do many in other cars. ■

INTERIOR VIEW

DO CARS STILL MATTER?

“Y

OU TEST CARS FOR A

living?” The fellow party guest to whom I’d just been introduced smiled politely. I nodded, expecting the usual follow-up: “Wow. What a great job!” Instead, the guy suddenly burst out laughing: “Now there’s a career with no future!”

I shuffled away to refill my glass of indifference. “Probably one of those twits who reads magazines without cars on their covers,” I muttered to myself. Then again, lately I’m hearing a similar refrain—“The automobile is dead!”—more and more. The intelligentsia likes to use the term “peak car,” as if somehow we’ve planted a collective flag on our automotive Everest—and it’s all downhill from here. Others point to the impending dawn of autonomous automobiles, implying that soon we’ll happily trade in our human-guided vehicles so we can all beta-test the latest release of Windows Freeway at 90 mph. Still others, mostly those age 25 and under, will momentarily lift their eyes from their smartphones and ask, “Cars? What on Earth are those?”

But I say, with respect to the automobile, especially as this magazine celebrates its 30th anniversary, “It’s alive! It’s alive, it’s alive, it’s alive!” Allow me to elaborate.

What’s the first skill you acquired that meaningfully changed your life? Don’t tell me, “I learned to ride horses at camp,” because you are now a marketing manager or a lawyer or a civil engineer and the last time you said “whoa!” was when your colleague accidentally posted those uncensored selfies to his Facebook page. No, your first significant life-improving skill was learning to drive. Suddenly, you had freedom beyond your dreams, enormous responsibility, an unprecedented sense of pride and accomplishment. And then you went right out and drove Dad’s Lincoln into a mailbox. But never mind: That first fender-bender was a rite of passage, too. If we take away cars and force everyone to ride around in automated transport pods instead, no one will ever *need* to get a driver’s license. Teenagers will never know that heady mix of elation and fear that accompanies those first solo months behind the wheel. Quite possibly, no one will ever look out of a car window again.

Have you ever thumbtacked a poster of a coffeemaker to your bedroom wall? Ever giddily perused the specs of a new waffle iron? Ever said to your best buddy: “One day, dude, I’m gonna own a Kelvin Excelsior gas range of my very own!” Of course not. They’re appliances, soulless and dull. Autonomous vehicles will be the same. Sure, one might be more lavish than another, might recharge a little quicker, but they’ll all be built simply to get you from here to there. As for electrifying your corpuscles ... forget it. Never in recorded history has one person waxed ecstatic about the performance and handling of the New York subway.



Which brings me to this argument: Cars aren’t simply transportation. At their best, they *transport* you. Behind the wheel of an engaging automobile, the open road uncoiling before you as the engine wails, the sunlight glints off the hood, the wind tumbles past your mirrors, you leave behind not just your starting point, but worries, troubles, impositions. The wheels underfoot are dancing not to the digital dictates of some overheated microchip but to your organic inputs, your fancies, your needs. Go ahead, press the throttle a little harder, twist in a tad more gas in the turns. No automaton will ever be able to replicate the jubilation of being in control of a charismatic transportation machine. I fly in airliners, and I pilot aircraft myself. The former is like being a piece of mail; the latter, you’re an eagle.

We need to save the uninitiated from the coming plague of automated vehicular passivity. Yes, I realize that many in the new generation would happily trade the demands of driving a car for uninterrupted texting and tweeting, but that’s only because they don’t know better. Cars aren’t mere conveyances; they’re liberation machines, steel and glass escape artists. Cars can get you where you need to go and reawaken your soul along the way.

If nothing else, we owe it to history to pass the torch of our automotive ardor to a new generation. If Enzo Ferrari were alive to see someone walk right past one of his cars in a smartphone trance, he’d never stop throwing up. ■



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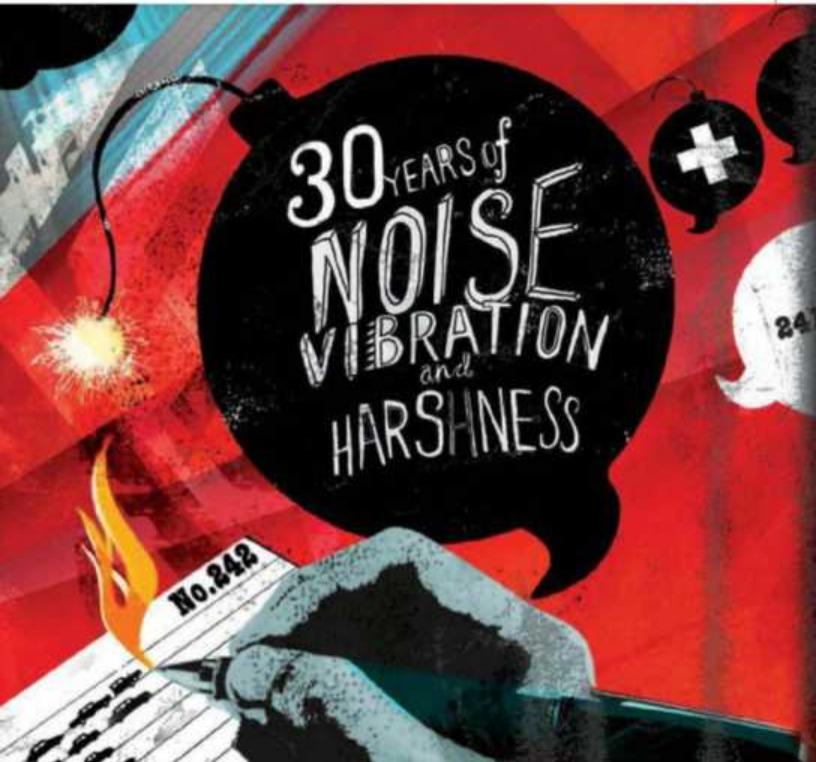
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THOUGHTS ON OUR 30TH

LONG BEFORE I STARTED bloviating for a living, senior staffers at Automobile's home base in Ann Arbor, the Paris of southeastern Michigan, had identified yours truly—Brooklyn-born with a strong backwash of Jersey—as voluble, over-opinionated, and curmudgeonly beyond his (then) tender gearhead years. Which they weren't always necessarily happy about. But it somehow led them to conclude I was columnist material. It also gave the magazine's former copy chief, the sainted Laura Sky Brown, an idea for the name of my column: Noise, Vibration & Harshness, or as the engineers call it, NVH.



With moments to spare before going to press, it was as fine a suggestion of a column name as there could ever be, and I remain eternally grateful. Why, if I were to pay Laura a penny today for every one of the 242 columns I've written for this august journal since she gave mine a name, she could buy lunch off a lesser fast-food joint's poor person menu. It's on me, sweets.

Anyway, Messrs. Editor Floyd and Morrison thought it would be good for me to ring in this magazine's 30th birthday with a remembrance of some of the most noisy, vibratory, and

harsh moments in this column's life. Of which there have been a few, upsetting advertisers, editors, and occasionally both. Extensive collateral damage to the reading public can also be stipulated.

Turns out I'd run into NVH issues long before I started writing this column in 1992. In 1989, I was sent to San Diego to drive the 1990 Pontiac lineup. Out on a test loop in a Grand Prix, a Pontiac engineer preemptively apologized for pretty much the entire range. In a show of frankness I've not seen since, he confided that the cars suffered due to a lack of development funds, thanks to wrongheaded investments in aerospace and data companies in the '80s by departed GM chairman Roger Smith. When the story ran quoting the unnamed engineer, Pontiac objected angrily, threatening to pull its advertising and calling for my head. But founder/editor David E. Davis Jr., fierce as a bull rhinoceros when he felt like it, told them to stuff it. He was really good like that, editorial independence-wise.

He was also kind of bad like that sometimes, too. For instance, he shot down the first column I wrote as soon as he saw it concerned the ad campaign for the fourth-generation Camaro launching in 1992. I thought to spend 1,000 words on an early advert for the new model and its tagline, "First Rock and Roll, Now This." I thought it was stupid and said so. David E. didn't disagree. What mattered was that the campaign had been cooked up by the big man's old comrades at Chevy's ad agency, Campbell Ewald. As he explained, they didn't need a snotty potshot from some East Coast pinko punk. So I came up with something else.

In a rare display of kindness, West Coast editor Michael Jordan had generously counseled the young me on the eve of my first column to do what I did, only more so. But this column-writing business was more difficult than I'd imagined. Not long after the Camaro debacle, I wrote decrying the exploding popularity of SUVs, taking issue with the belief that these high-riders were in any way necessary, environmentally conscious, or safe. David E., who'd railed against overweight Detroit iron as a younger man, loudly barred the piece from the magazine's pages, threatening to run a blank page in its place. The space was ultimately filled by a guest column from the redoubtable P.J. O'Rourke (see page 102), a substitution I viewed as an honor.

Anyway, I managed to sell a version of the column to The New York Times, and in 1994 it became the Times' (and I proudly believe the free world's) first-ever anti-SUV op-ed. Hitting them where they banked, the worst sacrilege of all, several carmakers stopped inviting me to drive their cars. But they got over it; fortunately for them, no one was listening to me and America's Excursion to Yukon Denali trucked ever

onward. I was eventually permitted to complain about it in these pages.

I did it again in 1997 when General Motors posted an all-time record quarterly profit. I wrote predicting its future bankruptcy, another column pronounced dead on arrival. My point was, as light trucks exceeded 50 percent of sales volume for the first time, GM wasn't even pretending to keep pace with Honda or Toyota in the passenger car realm and, crucially, no longer knew how to build a really good car. As I saw it, three things might soon upend GM fatally: rising gas prices, imminent Japanese competition, and/or a change in fashion. Some years later, all of these did arrive to kick GM in the butt. I called David E. to discuss his spiking of my opus. All the courage I'd summoned to get in the boss' imposing grille evaporated as he gave the curiously disarming explanation, "You shouldn't have written this. I should have." But he never did. That one was retooled to run in the Los Angeles Times.

In 2000, the noise was harsh once more after my column poking fun at gas price chicanery and climate change denialism among oil companies. Called "Ask the ExxonMobil Answer Man," a play on the old Shell Oil commercials, this one swiftly resulted in the cancellation of a \$350,000 ExxonMobil ad campaign. Ouch. But, to my delight, the editorial/advertising firewall went up, with newly installed editor-in-chief Jean Jennings going to bat for me. And I never heard about it again. Until I was summoned, in kind of a bizarro world penance, to help pitch the Arnold advertising agency for Volkswagen's



**BACK IN 1997 WHEN
GENERAL MOTORS
POSTED AN ALL-TIME
RECORD QUARTERLY PROFIT.
I WROTE PREDICTING
ITS FUTURE BANKRUPTCY,
ANOTHER COLUMN
PRONOUNCED
DEAD ON ARRIVAL.**

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MARRS

business, making the case that the magazine's crusading environmental sensitivity—as demonstrated by columns like mine—was the type of message Generation Xers that VW hoped to reach were looking for.

Ironic, today, to ponder VW in the infancy of its modern green period, given all we know now. But I was happy to shill for *Automobile*. Because the truth was, whatever its differences, successive teams of staff had run a majority of the impolitic and heretical things I'd written. For as my wise, old, writer-dad Marvin pointed out when I despaired, the freedom I enjoyed (and enjoy) was the best I could realistically hope for, probably even better. As the great American journalist A.J. Liebling once put it so cogently, in the end, freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one. ■



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OUR INTERVIEW WITH LAMBORGHINI TEST DRIVER

Valentino Balboni and his history with the Miura ("Where Are They Now?" February 2016) brought

to mind my own first experience with the model. It was the mid-1970s, and a friend of my father had come to tell him about the car he'd recently purchased in Italy and driven across Nevada to Salt Lake City. My jaw dropped as he described the Lamborghini Miura that had been the pace car at that year's F1 race in Monaco. Three days later, Mr. Kemp gave me a Balboni-style ride in the gleaming white Miura. A nearby section of freeway had just been completed, but while it wasn't yet open to traffic, Mr. K had me move a couple of sawhorses to the side so we could have the four-lane pavement to ourselves. I folded into the passenger seat, and Mr. K put the gear selector in first and asked, "You ready?" I nodded and Mr. K punched it. The Miura's nose rose slightly, and the car clawed its way through gear changes and past 130 mph. Altogether it was a glorious hour spent in a magnificent car.

MIKE LEE

Hernando, Mississippi

BALBONI BOLOGNESE

A few years ago I was having lunch again at Bologna Cafe in Nokomis, Florida. On that random, lucky day, proprietor Claudio asked me if I knew the distinguished gentleman across from me. It was none other than Valentino Balboni ("Where Are They

Now?" February 2016). His English is no better than my Italian, but it was one of those incredible accidents of time and space that I will always keep with me.

JAMES HOGLUND
Bend, Oregon

MYSTIQUE OF THE ACURA NSX

The statements by Ted Klaus, the Acura NSX's

global product leader, seem arrogant at best ("Driven," February 2016): "We are going to unsettle the sports car world ... and disturb some people."

From a company that has not designed a sports car from a clean sheet of paper in more than 25 years?

GEORGE LAMPUS
Via the Internet

It's almost as if he's saying that a sports car doesn't need a brand label from Europe to drive great. Such arrogance.-Ed.

Looking at your specifications of the 2017 Acura NSX article, they clearly state that this new car is 47.8 inches wide and 87.3 inches tall. Now that is a toaster on wheels!

BRIAN BOARDMAN
Cleveland, Ohio

We regret the transposition.-Ed.

MORE DESIGN OF THE YEAR

Elevating the importance of design is a very good thing ("Design of the Year," January 2016). Of course there are beautiful cars today, but most of them are beyond the means of most mortals. I hope Lincoln gets this message, forgets about the Germans, and remembers its roots in beautiful, affordable cars.

TOM LEIH
Austin, Texas

The design of current cars and light trucks is appalling. Remote-mounted cameras are to become mandatory, but we wouldn't need them if we could see out of the vehicle in the first place. Oh, dear, here come the white coats to administer my meds.

LEON G. SACK
Tampa, Florida

Every time I read "By Design," I am reminded of those wine labels that go on and on about notes of pine nuts with a fruity finish and *eau de varsol*. It would be less painful to stick needles in my eyes and run out to Interstate 64 and be run over by trucks.

TRIP FERGUSON
Newport News, Virginia

How much does design influence the type of car I buy? ("Editor's Letter," January 2016.) It's really no different than the role that good looks play in dating.

MATT FONG
Via the Internet

I have strong negative feelings about the breed of automobile known as "neoclassic" ("Standing on Their Own," January 2016). These cars were not good looking when new and have not improved with age. I challenge the

supposition that these cars are now classics in their own right. To be a classic, a car should have timeless styling and not be overdone or faddish. The Clenet has five sets of forward-facing lights, plus radiator ornament overkill.

GILBERT WASSERZIEHER
Via the Internet

When you turn on your car, should it not do the same for you?

BOB RILEY
Via the Internet

ROAD TRIPS

Thanks for the detailed review of Utah ("Parks and Recreation," February 2016). I'm eagerly awaiting the next issue of *National Geographic* to see how the 2016 Toyota Tacoma performs off-road, on-road, or anywhere else for that matter.

TOM WARDA
Rochester, New York

"Michigan's scarred roads" is the nicest way to describe a couple thousand dollars of damage to the wheels of your 2014 Ford Fiesta ST ("Four Seasons Wrap," February 2016). Recently citizens of Hamtramck, Michigan, pooled their resources to buy a truckload of asphalt to fill potholes.

DAVE KLOMAN
Via Internet

DESIGN STYLINGS OF GEORG KACHER

Who co-owns Kacher's hat ("Ferrari 488 Spider," February 2016)?

WILL HOLOMAN
Moab, Utah

FOR SALE AT AUCTION

Your recent report from Dave Kinney ("Auctions," February 2016) has me pondering the choices a few folks made over the summer. A 1985 Chrysler LeBaron convertible for \$13,200? A 1972 AMC Gremlin at



GEORG IN HAT: JÜRGEN SKARWAN

▼
Our 6-foot-8 pal Georg keeps it old school with his stylish fedora.

\$18,425? Well, that's horse racing; everyone makes a different bet. Last summer I put my money on a 1984 Corvette C4 with a manual transmission, Z51 suspension, and 75K miles. I bet only \$5,000, so I win.

PAUL IPOLITO
Rochester, New York



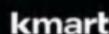
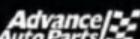
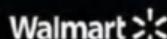
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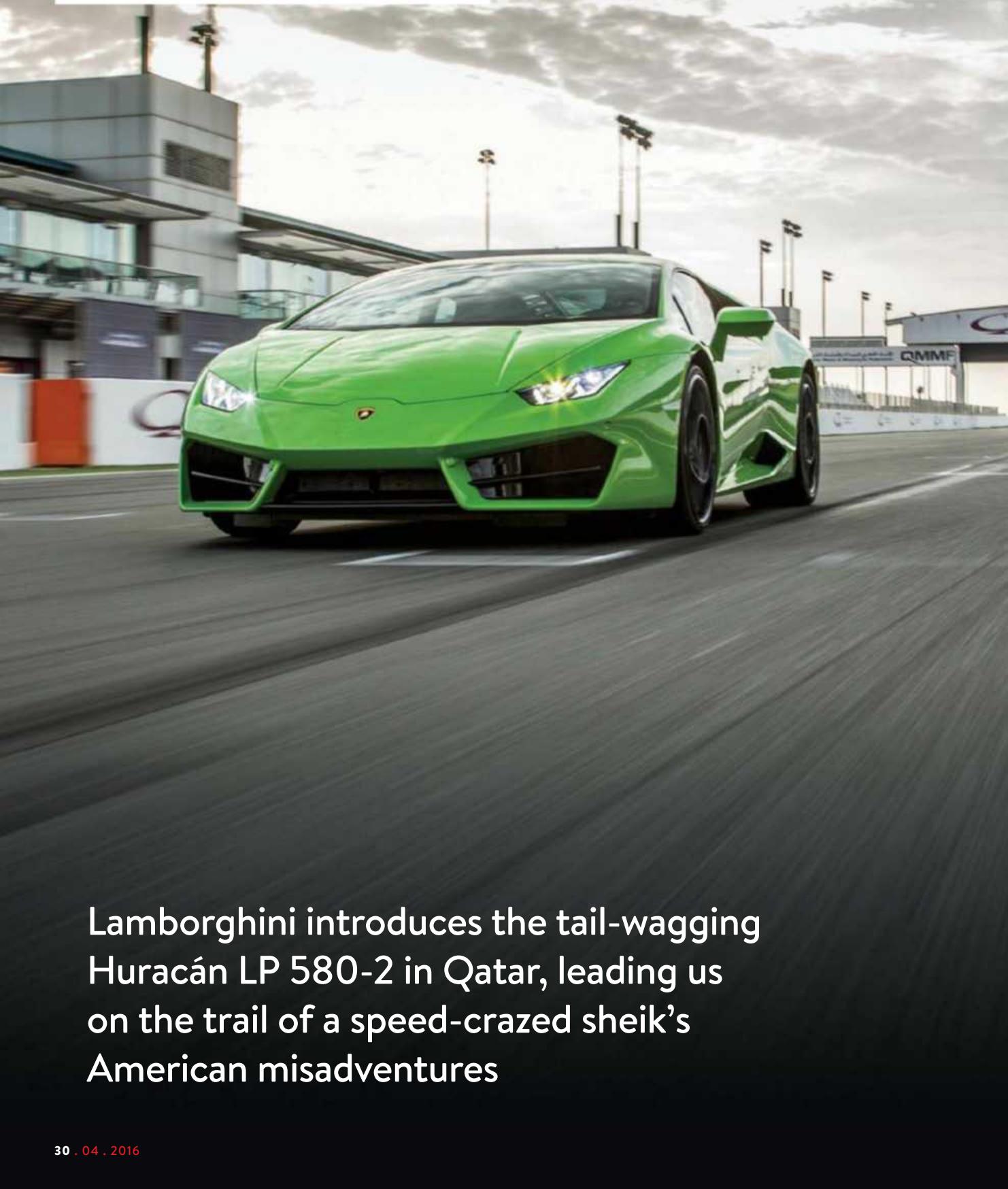
Driven

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LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN LP 580-2

Automobile

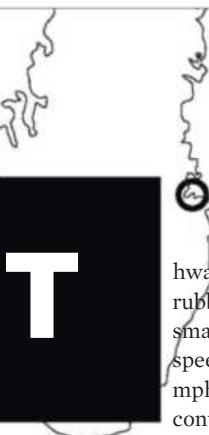
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS



Lamborghini introduces the tail-wagging Huracán LP 580-2 in Qatar, leading us on the trail of a speed-crazed sheik's American misadventures

30

2016 LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN LP 580-2 | BY RONALD AHRENS



DOHA, QATAR

T

hwack, thwack! Chunks of rubber fly off the track and smack the windshield as the speedometer indicates 160 mph. No damage, and I

continue to follow race driver Giacomo Barri into the braking zone, paddling away at the dual-clutch transmission, exhaust crackling. Off the brakes, turn hard right, and the sticky Pirelli grip. From the apex to beyond the exit, the throttle helps to direct the nose, the chassis always on alert to the

imminence of oversteer.

This is the 2016 Lamborghini Huracán LP 580-2, the new rear-wheel-drive variant in the lineup. It's lighter by about 73 pounds, slightly less powerful, and less expensive than the all-wheel-drive Huracán LP 610-4. To preserve the hierarchy, the LP 580-2's 5.2-liter V-10 puts out 572 horsepower, 30 less than the LP 610-4. Yet the 580-2 still dashes from 0 to 60 mph in roughly 3.3 seconds and touches 199 mph, and its 40:60 front to rear weight distribution is a couple of percentage points better.

The LP 580-2 was developed alongside the rear-drive Huracán Super Trofeo used in Lamborghini's single-make racing series. It has specially formulated driving modes and steering rates, stiffer suspension, and Pirelli P Zero tires—this car wore available 245/30R-20 front and 305/30R-20 rear rubber—with a distinct compound, structure, and tread design to yield sharper turn-in response. Larger air intakes in front and unique taillights further distinguish the LP 580-2 from the LP 610-4.

The LP 610-4 clocks faster laps, but it sometimes feels robotic and is prone to understeer. On the 3.3-mile, 16-turn Losail International Circuit, the LP 580-2 exhibits a caffeinated, bright-eyed quality, like the student who always asks for extra credit. We could easily induce oversteer, correct it, and continue on our storming way. Completing these hot laps required cunning and reflexes, and we managed it without a slurping turbocharger or unduly influential electronics.

Addition by subtraction

GO TEAM MAROON

Fantasies come true on this secondary peninsula of 4,247 square miles that juts from the vast Arabian Peninsula into the Persian Gulf. At the start of World War II, Doha's 12,000 inhabitants lived in fly-infested, mud-brick houses and longed for the good old days of pearl diving. Today, after oil and gas development, native Qataris number about 275,000, living among nearly 2 million expats, including European and American managers, English-speaking Filipinos working in hospitality, and Pakistanis and Sudanese holding shovels and hand-loading bricks onto trucks.

Qataris live in glass towers and behind villa walls, most of which affect postmodern Arabic style in the same way new buildings in Santa Fe affect the Pueblo vernacular. Encountering a perfumed Qatari in his long white *thawb* in the Four Seasons lobby, I learned not to expect acknowledgement. Otherwise, Doha has a familiar feeling right down to the McDonald's inside the City Center mall. Traffic looks like that of West Los Angeles except for the lack of Teslas and Priuses and the abundance of Land Cruisers.

Qatar is where a young princeling who loves cars can decide to come to America and buy a National Hot Rod Association team. That's how Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani was dubbed drag racing's "patron sheik" in 2009. Taking its name from the Qataris' cheer of "Go Team



Maroon," a reference to the maroon-and-white national flag, Al-Anabi Racing spent lavishly to support Alan Johnson Racing; the combination won three Top Fuel championships but few hearts. "I know they were getting a lot of heat from the fans," said the sport's legendary Don "The Snake" Prudhomme. "It didn't put a smile on my face and really didn't do anything for NHRA. If he was spending the \$50 million on me, I'd feel a little different about it."

Sheik Khalid pulled support from Al-Anabi Racing just before the 2015 season. Yet his sporting pursuits were only stuck in neutral. On June 23, having heard of the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb for the first time, he called event chairman Tom Osborne asking to participate. As if he'd rubbed a magic lantern, his wish was granted. "He flew in the next day and brought his folks," Osborne told a local newspaper. By "folks" he meant a full retinue that bombed through Colorado Springs in Porsches.

Retuned selectable driving modes allow for oversteer in the Huracán.



“WE ARE THE ONLY SUPER SPORTS-CAR MANUFACTURER THAT IS DOING FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE CARS. BUT THIS DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE UNABLE TO DO WHAT THE OTHERS ARE DOING, AND TO DO IT EVEN BETTER.”

Honda had obtained the PPIHC pace-car status for the new Acura NSX; Khalid followed about three minutes behind in his Porsche 918 Spyder, which had no rollcage or, as competitor Alex Lloyd observed, "the Weissach package that lightens the car significantly. If you were a track guy, that would be the package you would absolutely have." Asked about the circumstances behind Khalid's exhibition run, PPIHC executive director Megan Leatham explained, "He was not an official competitor but was more of a 'sweep' vehicle/demonstration run." I wondered what terms had led to Khalid's sweeping debut, but Leatham said, "We don't want to comment on this any further."

In September, Khalid reappeared in the news after a reported street race between a Ferrari LaFerrari and Porsche 911 GT3 ended with smoke coming from the Ferrari's engine bay in a Beverly Hills driveway. When police arrived, Khalid denied driving. And besides, he claimed diplomatic immunity.





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Subsequently, the Ferrari disappeared; a private jet, said to be registered in Bermuda, arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia. Khalid was traced to a hotel there.

Qatar has produced other motorsports figures, but Sheik Khalid's prodigality has even managed to overshadow countryman Nasser Al-Attiyah, who in 2015 won his second Dakar Rally.

DRAGS, DRIFTING, AND DUNE BUGGIES

On my first night in Doha, I strolled along the promenade past the Museum of Islamic Art, fronted by a large sculptural representation of a dallah, the traditional Bedouin coffee pot. This well-lit white vessel makes a strange sight in the same view as the Doha Tower, 46 stories of what French architect Jean Nouvel calls, ahem, "fully assumed virility." Closer to Al-Jazeera Tower, a roar went up on Corniche Street: a Mustang and Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT took off from the stoplight, the SUV winning by a nose. It reminded me that Khalid began street racing at age 15, perhaps right here on this six-lane boulevard.

Nowadays, Al-Anabi Racing is active in the Arabian Drag Racing League's events staged at the Qatar Racing Club facility just beyond Doha's industrial area. Coming up that weekend was the National Day 4x4 and Stunt Driving Event. It would send up big clouds of tire smoke in tribute to Sheik Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Thani's 1878 unification of Qatari tribes.

Doha, therefore, made sense for the LP 580-2 media launch. What an automotive culture: drags, drifting, sand buggies, and of course track days at Losail are all within 30 minutes of Corniche. Anyone with the hankering could go to Lamborghini Doha, located in Al Muftah Plaza. First opened in 2004, the sales point was upgraded in 2007; Automobili Lamborghini CEO Stephan Winkelmann stood by at the ceremony as dealer principal Sheik Abdulrahman



For this entry-level Huracán, the 5.2-liter V-10 produces a flyspeck less power, but plenty remains for pitching the car sideways and smoking the specially developed Pirellis.



THE SPECS

2016
LAMBORGHINI
HURACÁN LP 580-2

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$204,595 (base)

ENGINE: 5.2L DOHC

40-valve V-10/

572 hp @ 8,000 rpm,

397 lb-ft @ 6,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

7-speed dual-clutch
automatic

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger,
mid-engine, RWD coupe

EPA MILEAGE:

15/22 mpg

(city/hwy) (est)

L x W x H:

175.6 x 75.7 x 45.9 in

WHEELBASE:

103.1 in

WEIGHT:

3,062 lb (dry)

0-60 MPH:

3.3 sec (est)

TOP SPEED:

199 mph

bin Hamad bin Mohammed Al-Thani said, "Lamborghini remains the epitome of performance, exclusivity, and luxury, and Qatar is one of the most dynamic and wealthy countries in the Middle East."

In fact, the brand is well represented on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Gulf states. Besides Doha, there are showrooms in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. Saudi Arabia has three. On the second night of my stay, Winkelmann, who is reportedly stepping down as Lamborghini CEO to assume a position at Audi's Quattro division, presided during dinner at the world's largest Nobu, located on a man-made spit extending into Doha Bay. He said that during his decade-plus at the helm he's visited all those locations short of Muscat, Oman.

When Winkelmann is back at headquarters in Sant'Agata Bolognese, he samples the latest prototypes. As such, he had a small hand in development of the LP

580-2. "I'm not an extreme driver; I'm the fastest of the slow," he said, extolling the new car's "controllability, rawness, and excitement." He acknowledged Lamborghini's brand characteristics include naturally aspirated engines, extreme design, and all-wheel drive. "We are the only super sports-car manufacturer that is doing four-wheel-drive cars. But this doesn't mean we're unable to do what the others are doing, and to do it even better."

Indeed, the LP 580-2 drives into a corner on the edge of Chef Nobu Matsuhisa's sushi knife, points the way out like a vizsla hunting dog, and delivers big grins during countersteering. The Ferrari 488 GTB and McLaren 570S make more power with smaller, turbocharged V-8s, but the boost can be overwhelming, and they lack the V-10's thrilling, high-rpm shriek. On the mean streets of Beverly Hills or main straight of Losail, the new Lambo strikes its own sweet note. ■

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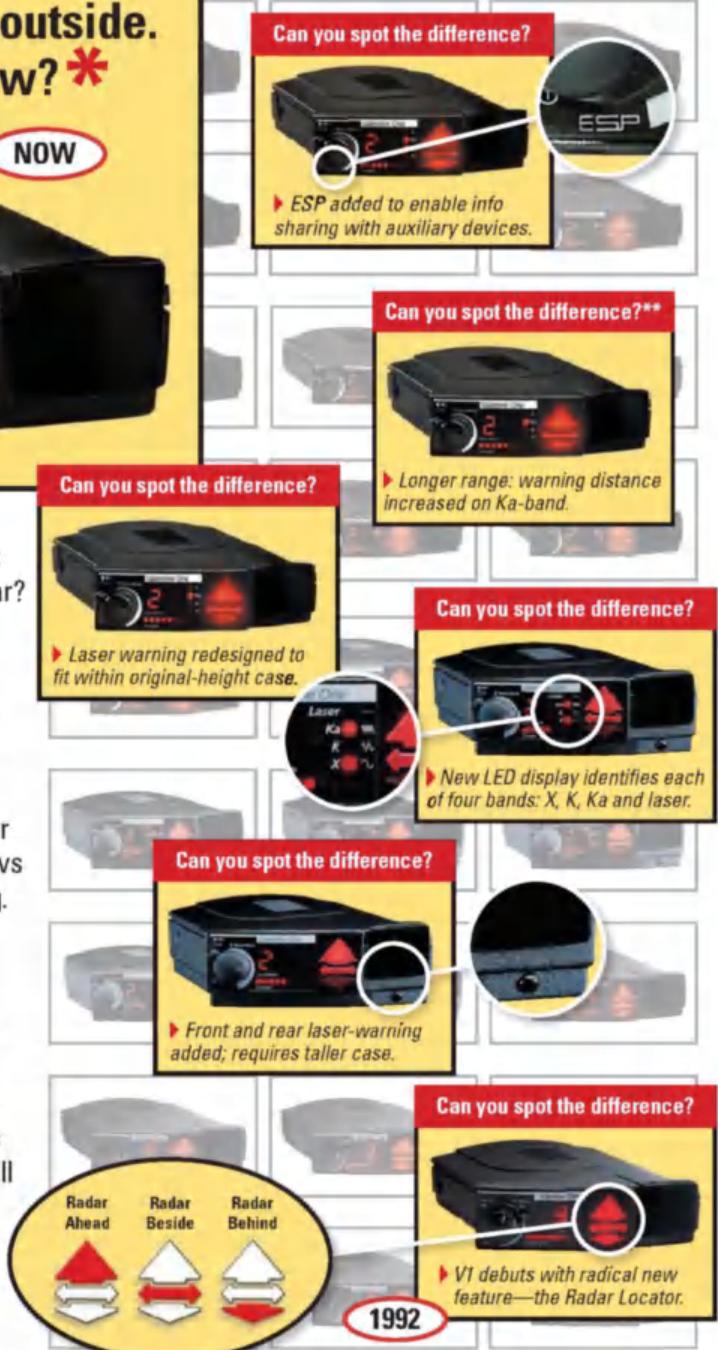
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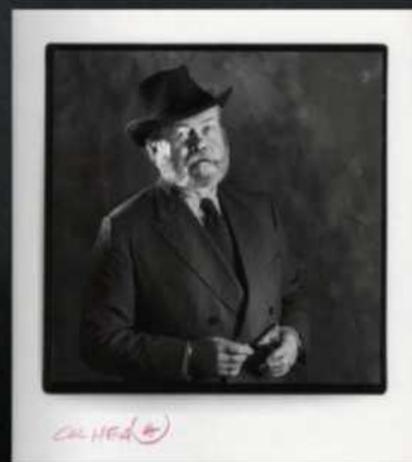
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AGGREGATING “THE WIT AND WISDOM
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30

YEARS OF AUTOMOBILE MAGAZINE

THE WORDS OF FOUNDING EDITOR **DAVID E. DAVIS JR. TELL US HOW IT ALL HAPPENED BACK THEN AND WHAT IT ALL STILL MEANS TODAY**

described his aspirations:

"*Automobile Magazine* is a celebration of quality—quality in automobiles, quality of life, and quality in magazines. We seek adventure and the good life, and we seek them in cars that are fun to drive. We'll drive exciting cars to unforgettable places. We'll go wherever the roads go, and sometimes beyond. We'll wring out and review some of the finest, fastest, and most interesting cars in the world each month, and we'll bring them to life with the most evocative photography and illustration that money can buy. We won't waste your time with tiresome tales of boring cars."

There were many unconventional personalities who signed up for the ride. But for all the great writers and photographers who found their way to *Automobile*, DED Jr. also included his readers as a crucial component of the outlet's culture. As he noted in April 1993 on our seventh anniversary:

"A special-interest magazine serves as a catalyst for thousands of far-flung and disparate individuals like yourself, putting you in touch with one another and welding you into a sharply defined community of interest. Through your participation in a magazine like ours, you become a cohesive audience with

a personality and a will of its own. ... You guys become an active and dynamic force, a sharply defined group of highly motivated and well-informed car buyers. You have clout. And we appreciate the fact that you always seem to get the jokes."

As long as we all knew him, David E.'s office, whether in New York City or Ann Arbor, Michigan, always displayed a massive array of framed pictures, most of which were souvenirs or remembrances of assorted adventures and misadventures. And if you knew where to look on the wall, you would find one of his favorite items, a pseudo facsimile of an advertisement purportedly placed in a London newspaper in 1913 by Ernest Shackleton, the legendary Antarctic explorer.

Perhaps the ad is apocryphal as no physical evidence of it has ever been found, but we all knew what it meant, and it called out to everyone who ever signed on to this publication, including every reader. And on this 30th anniversary, it's as relevant to us all as ever:

"Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JORGE NUNEZ

David E. Davis Jr. often recalled for us those first few days in 1955 soon after his arrival in California from Detroit. He would speed through the darkened streets of Los Angeles at midnight to pick up his wife from her job as an American Airlines reservations clerk. The sound of his MG's straight-pipe exhaust booming in the concrete canyons filled him with exhilaration at having reached the heart of what it meant to drive a sports car and live the life it offered. It was a feeling he thought all car enthusiasts wanted to share, he said. As much as anything, this experience in that faraway time was the moment when he created *Automobile Magazine*.

David E. (1930-2011) is gone now, of course, but when you read the collection of magazine columns from his long career that he left behind in "Thus Spake David E." (Momentum Books, 1999), you get a sense of what *Automobile* should be about.

The actual first issue would have to wait until April 1986, of course. First David E. would have to prevail over a nasty racing crash in his MG TF 1500 and learn the magazine business from Elaine and John Bond at *Road & Track*—especially Elaine, who was the smart one, he said. He would develop a sense of romance as the chief advertising copywriter for the Corvette, where soon-to-be crime novelist Elmore Leonard sat only a few desks away, and then finally in 1962 take a writing position at *Car and Driver* in New York City, where he quickly became editor and publisher. New York's literary culture in those days helped David E. create a different kind of car magazine, and it changed the template for car magazines everywhere.

When he returned to *Car and Driver* as editor and publisher in 1976 after some lucrative years in the advertising world, it was the romance of great cars, great driving, and great places that brought him back. Yet even in the midst of that magazine's great success in the 1980s, David E. longed to create a new title that would aspire to more than just the wall-to-wall hardware promoted by magazine publishers. And in 1985, an unexpected handshake with media mogul Rupert Murdoch led to the first issue of *Automobile* in April 1986. David E.'s first column



By **Rory Jurnecka** |
Photography by **Julia LaPalme**



30



WHEN MAGNUM P.I. MET MISTER TWO

Revisiting *Automobile*'s first cover story

Thirty years ago, when *Automobile*'s first subscribers received the long-awaited debut issue in their mailboxes, these are the two cars they saw first. As disparate as they were similar, the 1985 Ferrari 308 QV and 1986 Toyota MR2 both strove for the same goal: to deliver driving excitement. The difference was how they went about it.

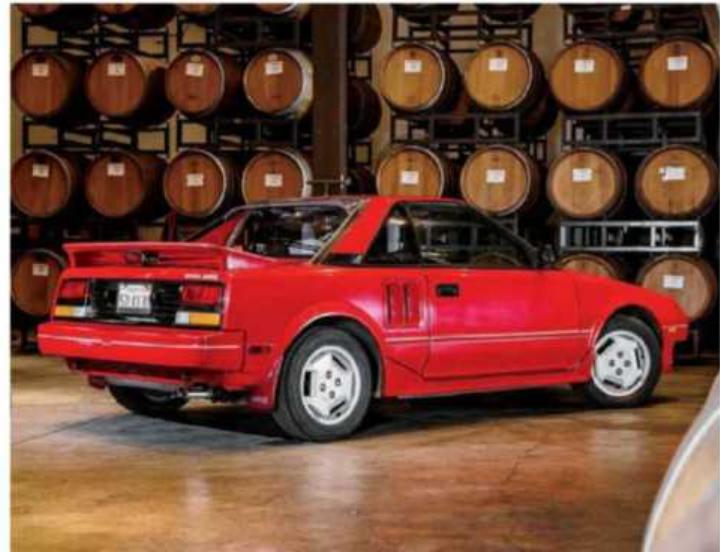
For the cover story, David E. Davis Jr. wanted to know how a cut-rate Japanese sports car built almost entirely from econobox parts-bin bits competed against a thoroughbred Italian with an engine drawing from Formula 1 experience. It was a valid question, especially if you couldn't swing the near-\$60,000 price tag for the latter, and it remains interesting today.

We see these cars together for the first time at Chateau Julien, the photo location and a picturesque winery in the heart of California's Carmel Valley. Each vehicle boasts fascinating design details. Sure, the word "pretty" isn't often used to describe the little Toyota, but its box-meets-wedge, origami-esque styling is difficult to stop ogling. Then there's that air intake, found only on the passenger side of the car and sure to drive OCD types to frenzy: More than one enthusiast has fitted their MR2 with a matching driver's-side intake, a modification made somewhat difficult by the fuel filler's placement.

There are two rear spoilers, one on the trunklid and a nifty clear plastic wing on the roof's trailing edge. When viewed from the rear while catching the sun properly, the MR2's "Toyota" script reflects down into the rear window—a cool trick.

The Ferrari, meanwhile, couldn't look more Italian if it tried. The 308 is draped in classic Pininfarina-penned genius. Hard angles meeting flowing curves with enough grilles, vents, and scoops thrown in to fill a Trapper Keeper with childhood doodles. The earliest 308s wore fiberglass body panels, but by the 1980s, composites gave way to good, old-fashioned steel for a slight disadvantage in weight. Pininfarina resisted the temptation to add a flashy trunk-mounted spoiler to such an elegant design, opting instead for a vinyl-covered wing that hangs subtly between the rear buttresses, just aft of the targa-style roof. The only awkward styling elements are the black U.S.-spec bumpers dangling precariously off both ends of the car. Flush-fitting Euro-spec bumpers are a common replacement, though they aren't DOT certified. In 1986, the succeeding 328 would do a far better job of integrating its crash protection.

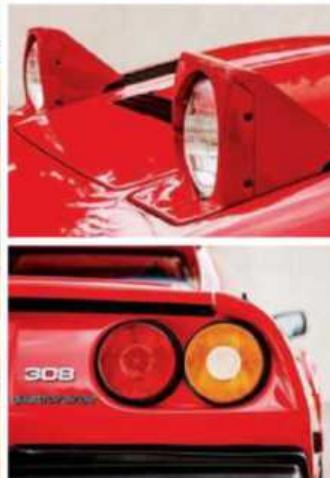
“
GOD HELP THE ITALIANS IF
THE JAPANESE EVER DECIDE
TO BUILD SUPERCARS.”





MR2 meets 308

Style and grace: Italian design shines through in the leather-trimmed cabin and the PF-penned exterior lines. A metal-gated shifter offers a classic experience.



The 308's roots trace back to the Dino series of road cars that began production in 1969 with the 206 GT. Designed as a smaller, cheaper sub-brand, the Dino boasted a six-cylinder engine with a real racing pedigree. Enzo Ferrari decreed that only his late son's name would grace the tiny Dino, but halfway through the life cycle of the succeeding Dino 308 GT4 with its new 3.0-liter V-8 engine, 2+2 seating, and controversial Bertone styling, Ferrari slapped his own name on the rear and a prancing horse badge on the front to boost sales.

By the time the new 308 GTB launched in 1976 in Europe, the styling contract was back to Pininfarina and a modern classic was born, to be later immortalized in the U.S. for its prominent role in the "Magnum, P.I." television series, driven by Tom Selleck's title character. Ferrari's mid-engine lineage continues to this day with the 488 GTB.

The MR2's origins are much more humble, beginning as mainly a collection of parts from various Corollas. The engine is a terrific little dual-overhead-cam 1.6-liter four-banger with fuel-injec-

tion and a then-state-of-the-art 16-valve cylinder head courtesy of Yamaha. The engine bowed in the AE86 sport coupe, where it was loved for its free-revving nature and then-stratospheric redline of 7,500 rpm. Toyota developed the strut-type suspension front and rear, a Lotus engineer fine-tuned it, and none other than American ex-F1 ace Dan Gurney track-tested it. Disc brakes all around and a quick-shifting five-speed gearbox completed the package.

It's not by chance I elect to drive the MR2 first. It's fairly obvious the Toyota is



Fun on a budget: The MR2's bird-themed badge is no doubt inspired by Pontiac's Fiero. Lots of plastic in the interior, but it's generally of high quality.

MR2 meets 308



at a moderate performance disadvantage to the Ferrari, and I want to be able to savor the little sports car with a clean palate. Inside, the Toyota's cabin is spacious compared with, say, a Mazda Miata. My shoulders don't press against the doors as they do in many newer small sports cars, and the A-pillars are thin, which, combined with plenty of glass area including a pop-out sunroof, gives the interior an airy, spacious feel. The center console sits tall enough that it doubles as an armrest (underneath is the fuel tank), and the shifter sprouts from a vinyl boot at the top end. The driving position is nearly perfect, allowing good leg extension for taller drivers without placing the steering wheel too far away. Plastic abounds, but it's largely good-quality stuff, as attested to by its absence of wear over the course of more than 100,000 miles.

Setting off in the MR2, I'm struck by how light everything is. Not just the car

itself but all the controls, the steering, the clutch. It's as easy to drive as, well, a Toyota, but it's purposeful at the same time. The steering wheel is thin and feels very much alive, wriggling gently over road imperfections not unlike the helm of a similar vintage Porsche 911. The gear lever has a well-broken-in, notchy feel, but the throws are fairly short and precise, requiring little effort to swipe from gear to gear. The engine is a charmer; what it lacks in horsepower (112) it makes up for in character. At low revs, it doesn't feel much different from any run-of-the-mill economy car engine, but when the car's T-VIS variable intake system comes to life above 4,500 rpm, the engine note takes on a gruff new tone and spins up smartly toward its exotic-esque redline. The changeover doesn't deliver a gain in power as much as a gain in the sense of urgency. The engine sounds so frenetic that it seems strange the trees lining the

road aren't rushing by at hyperspeed. The car comes alive once it finds itself on any winding back road. There's a real delicacy to the MR2, which creates an instant rhythm as it flows in and out of turns. On its skinny, 185-mm-wide tires, it almost seems to float along the road. The ride quality is supple, though body roll is fairly minimal.

The Ferrari's door clicks open with a pull of the debonair metal latch at its top trailing edge and closes with a solid "thunk" after I settle inside. The driving position is incredibly low, with seats mounted right on the floor, putting my legs nearly perpendicular to my arms, which are outstretched toward the steering wheel. The switchgear is mostly metal stalks with plastic knobs, and whatever was covered in plastic or cloth in the Toyota is covered in vinyl or leather in the Ferrari.

The 308 ignites with a brief electric



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Civic Touring Sedan shown. ©2016 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

MR2 meets 308

whir from the starter. In contrast to many early carbureted cars, this fuel-injected four-valver fires nearly instantly with a bark, then settles quickly into a low, thrumming idle. I give the fairly heavy clutch pedal a push, and pull the long, chrome shift lever down into the dogleg first gear with a clink from the metallic gates; this is the quintessential Ferrari experience. The car moves off smoothly and is quite easy to drive. Though steering and shifting—even the throttle action—are a little heavier than in most cars, it doesn't take long to get comfortable behind the wheel. With nearly 3,400 pounds of mass to haul around, the car feels a little heavy after driving the 2,600-pound Toyota. Still, the mid-mounted V-8 has enough torque to give the car some brio, and climbing the serpentine Laureles Grade, the Ferrari instantly feels much more potent than the MR2.

That said, everything happens a little more deliberately in the Ferrari than in the Toyota. There's an awareness of mass and a feeling of more responsibility. Driving a Ferrari is never a carefree experience, but

the car seems to get better the harder it's pushed. Faster, more forceful shifts are cleaner than slower, careful ones. Firmer squeezes on the brake pedal show the strong capability of the decades-old system. And that sound ... only Ferrari could make a V-8 with such a sophisticated exhaust note. At low revs it's all mumbling bass, but wind the thing out and the symphony starts. It never approaches the haunting howl of Ferrari's V-12s or the shriek of the Dino V-6, but the 3.0-liter eight has a muscular grunt all its own.

Wrapping up his assessment all those years ago, Davis was enamored with the Ferrari's mystique—the way it performed and the way it sounded. "At 80 mph, the Ferrari's V-8 with its four belt-driven cams has drowned out the radio, your radar detector, and your girlfriend's voice," he wrote. But he foretold the future with his take on the Toyota.

"The MR2 is a source of pure, unalloyed driving fun and is infinitely superior to anything remotely like it. God help the Italians if the Japanese ever decide to build supercars." ■



A pair of twin-cam four-valvers: The MR2's 1.6 four, top, and the 308's 3.0 V-8.

THE SPECS

1986

Toyota MR2

PRICE WHEN NEW:

\$14,778

ENGINE:

1.6L DOHC 16-valve I-4 / 112 hp @ 6,600 rpm, 97 lb-ft @ 4,800 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

5-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, mid-engine RWD coupe

L x W x H:

154.5 x 65.6 x 48.6 in

EPA MILEAGE:

26 mpg (city)

WHEELBASE:

91.3 in

WEIGHT:

2,600 lb

0-60 MPH:

8.7 sec

TOP SPEED:

120 mph

1985

Ferrari 308 GTSi QV

PRICE WHEN NEW:

\$59,500

ENGINE:

3.0L DOHC 32-valve V-8 / 230 hp @ 6,800 rpm, 188 lb-ft @ 5,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

5-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger, mid-engine RWD coupe

L x W x H:

174.2 x 67.7 x 44.1 in

EPA MILEAGE:

11 mpg (city)

WHEELBASE:

92.1 in

WEIGHT:

3,350 lb

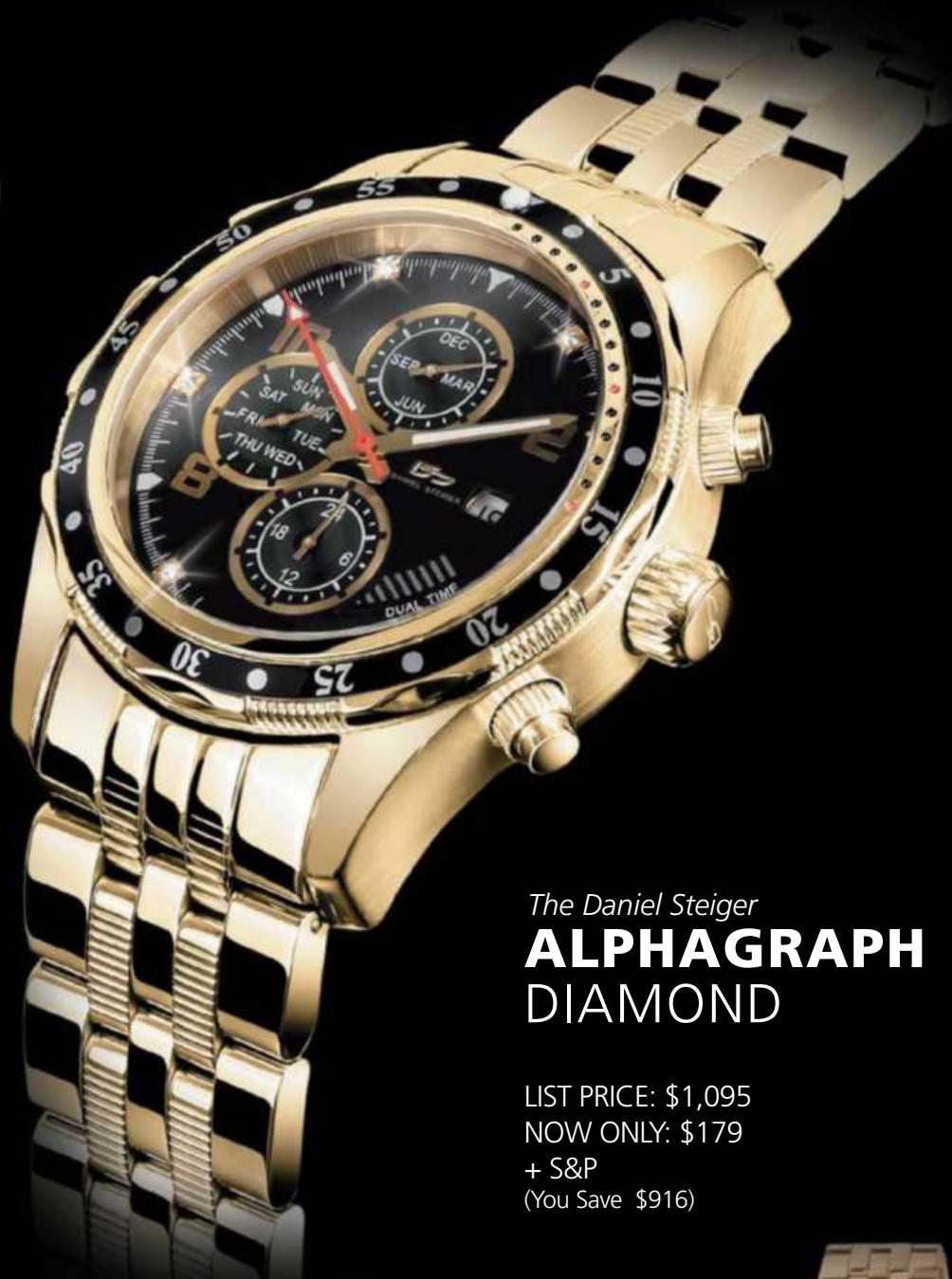
0-60 MPH:

7.1 sec

TOP SPEED:

151 mph





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Our Design of the Year is definitely not just a styling exercise. It combines, as do almost all revered cars through history, a form that evokes emotion and valid technology.



By Robert Cumberford |

Style or Design?

THE AUTOMOTIVE WORLD STRIVES TO BLEND BOTH

Editor Floyd's commitment to "hang our hat on telling compelling stories around design" in his January column brought a number of thoughtful letters from readers, several of them making distinctions between styling—how things look—and design—how things work. Reader Ken Schory said the Ford GT Design of the Year is "gorgeous sculpture" and "represents great styling, not necessarily great design." I think its styling is very good, but it is also great design, especially if the complex airflow works in practice.

This fundamental notion of denigrating styling and emphasizing engineering in design has arisen repeatedly in *Automobile's* first 30 years. Both aspects are vitally important to car creation. Everyone tries to make both beauty and function better than they were before, and if some projects and some protagonists are more directed to one pole or another, that's normal. When I started in the car design business, my offi-

cial title was junior stylist. That was perfectly true and perfectly fair. Barely 19, I liked cars, knew how to draw, and liked pretty shapes, so I provided my employer drawings of pretty shapes. The firm offered a chance to learn how to become a designer, the term I use to describe myself today. But it took a long time to earn the title.

We can look at where individual car creators stand on the continuum between pure style and the pure engineering that reader Bal Dubey considers the basis of good design without making useless distinctions about worthiness. Imagine a simple bar chart, with S for styling on the left and D for design on the right, with designers falling somewhere within. I've done that subjectively for some of the best.

Consider Harley Earl, responsible for the look of more than 50 million cars. To me, he was more stylist than designer, with less input toward function than he wanted to achieve. Trying to integrate the functions of his Art & Colour group with engineering and manufacturing, he militated for cars to be longer and lower, and once famously had workers cut apart a chassis in front of a group of General Motors executives, dramatically dropping the body to make his point that lower looked better. And he was supreme at his job, making people want to buy GM cars.

STYLE
THE CUMBERFORD SCALE



EARL

Cum

ROBERT CUMBERFORD AND AUTOMOBILE FOUNDER DAVID E. DAVIS JR. FIRST MET IN 1957, BEGINNING A FRIENDSHIP THAT SUBSEQUENTLY EVOLVED INTO A 30-YEAR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS MAGAZINE FOR CUMBERFORD, NOW OUR LONGEST-SERVING STAFF MEMBER.



ILLUSTRATIONS: SCOTT GARRETT & TIM MARRS



His five successors, in my view, all moved a bit closer to the right on the bar graph, but only the present incumbent, Ed Welburn, made his bones by creating the shape of a successful racing car, the Oldsmobile Aerotech—it set a closed-course speed record. Stylist Earl's racer, the Corvette SS, failed because he was so concerned with preserving its pretty paint job that he would not subject it to practice sessions.

Gordon Buehrig was certainly a great stylist, but his reimagining of car-body design with the Cord 810—totally eliminating the radiator grille as shield and mark of identity as well as hiding its headlamp “eyes”—was a radical change of design

direction far greater than Earl ever managed. His place is farther to the right.

Of Italian designers in the glorious 1946-'66 period, the best known and most successful financially, Giorgetto Giugiaro, is far more a stylist than Leonardo Fioravanti or Franco Scaglione, both of whom studied aeronautical engineering, or Marcello Gandini, who actually designed, engineered, and produced a lovely little one-man helicopter. But who could say, wherever they fall on the scale, they are not all great designers?

Giovanni Savonuzzi not only created the Cisitalia that informed all postwar Italian car design, he also led Chrysler's gas turbine engine program. His shapes were superb, his engineering highly impressive. He's a lot closer to the design/engineering end of the scale despite his brilliance as a stylist, but he was a lot less important than Earl in the history of the automobile. Me? I'm far from my junior stylist beginning. Over decades I've learned to do and appreciate engineering. Fifty years ago I designed a Can-Am racer. I think it was pretty stylish, but I'm proudest of the 49-pound honeycomb chassis and the 1-kilogram 4130 chrome-moly steel suspension uprights, which required more intellectual effort.

As to cavils about entrance conditions and rearward visibility in the Ford GT: It's a race car, Ken. ■



BUEHRIG



WELBURN



GIUGIARO



SCAGLIONE



FIORAVANTI



SAVONUZZI



GANDINI

DESIGN &
ENGINEERING

berifor

THE ENCLAVE



APRIL

Issue	Title	Photographer	Date Received
APRIL	NEWS		
	MR2 - 308	JAMES HAEFNER	
		JERRY KERRAN	
	BUICK GRAND NATIONAL	HUMPHREY SUTTON	
	POESHE		
	911 TURBO	DOUGIE FIRTH	
	SUPRA 86 1/2	RON HUSSEY	
	5 COUNTRIES	IAN DAWSON	
	ACURA	DOUGIE FIRTH	
	NON SEQ	BILL STAHL	
		HENRY RASMUSSEN	
		VIC HUBER	
		COLIN CURWOOD	
		MARTYN GODDARD	
		HUMPHREY SUTTON	
	MERCEDES BENZ	DAVID FRANKLIN	
	BILL NEALE		

AUTOMOBILE
AND THE WORLD
1986

30

END NOW

By Steven Cole Smith

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JORGE NUNEZ

Stats	NY Seps	Return
14		ON FILE
4		RETURN 9-29
3	2	RETURN 9-29 10AT - AM. CIRC?
27		PARTIAL SENT
8	7	POSSIBLY MISSING 1 - OUT 8-29 9-3
21		PARTIAL SENT
1017		RETURNED
1		10
1		
1		
1		
1		
8		
		sent to Cindy (N.Y.) 1-24-86
		sent to Cindy (N.Y.) 9-2-86
		ON FILE

Master Plan: The original assignment sheet for our April 1986 issue.

AUTOMOBILE
AND THE WORLD
2016

The Automotive World 1986/early 2016:

Best-selling truck: Ford F-150/Ford F-150

Best-selling car:

Chevrolet Celebrity/
Toyota Camry



Total domestic vehicle sales:

8.2 million/17.4 million (2015)

The Material Girl
was on top.



DAVID E.

showed up in downtown Dallas with a briefcase full of *Automobile* magazines, that first one with the Toyota MR2 and Ferrari 308 on the cover. He was there to see me. In 1986, I was the swinging dick of automotive journalism in Dallas, Texas.

David E. was the swinging dick in, well, the rest of the world.

I was the automotive writer for the Dallas Times Herald, and David E. hoped I would write a story about his new magazine.

I did, of course. This was big news. Davis was identified so closely with *Car and Driver* for so many years that the idea he would leave and take some bona-fide talent with him, including Jean (Lindamood) Jennings, was enormous in our cloistered little world.

Where there were four big general-interest car magazines—*Motor Trend*, *Car and Driver*, *Road & Track*, and *Autoweek*—suddenly there were five. Thirty years later, there are still five. Go figure.

The atmosphere in 1986 wasn't a bad one for a launch. Gas averaged \$1.12 a gallon, milk \$2.12. A portable computer was \$1,599—unfortunately it was a Tandy 600. Nintendo cost \$89.95. Hands Across

America! We were listening to Madonna ("Papa Don't Preach") and watching "Magnum, P.I." at home and "Top Gun" in theaters.

Unemployment was 7 percent. Ronald Reagan was president. (We've established that car-wise, who the president is doesn't really matter; after all, Barack Obama bailed out the car companies and gave us the Hellcat.)

Automotively, 1986 was a not-terrible year. The Chevrolet Corvette C4 was finding its legs; Acura launched as a brand; the second-gen Mazda RX-7 had just come out; Chrysler minivans were becoming the Next Big Thing; the Ford Mustang 5.0, all 200 horsepower, was cheap and loud. The 1986 Ford Taurus was a revelation, one that Ford was never able to coax into a sequel. Honda was red hot. American pickups ruled, after the manufacturers recovered from being blindsided by cheap little Toyotas and Nissans. BMW was figuring out what it took to succeed in America.

That was the world into which David E. Davis birthed *Automobile*. "No Boring Cars!" he said.

30

All new/returning to U.S. brands:Hyundai
Yugo
AcuraFiat
Alfa Romeo**All new/returning to U.S. nameplates:**Suzuki Samurai
Hyundai Excel
Yugo GV
Acura Legend
Acura Integra
Ford Taurus
Mercury Sable
BMW M3
Ford FestivaAcura NSX
Fiat 124
Chrysler Pacifica
Alfa Romeo Giulia
Ford GTFORD'S
GT IS BACK
AGAINYUGO: THE
BENZ OF '86
IMPORTS?**Introducing
the same old idea.**

Every generation or so, some smart people figure out how to make basic transportation at an affordable price. The "old" idea: simple, safe cars.

First came the Model T. A basic affordable idea that just about anybody could afford. And it had only been the year end of a horse before.

But then, over the years, bigger and more expensive became the way.

Until the economical Fiat 500 brought things back to reality again.

But then the Yugo went away.

and there was nothing to take its place.

Until the Yugo.

The Yugo is dependable,

front-wheel drive, inexpensive,

imported from Kragujevac, Serbia.

It's not a typewriter.

Or one hand, the Yugo is very

basic. But on the other, it's not so

basic. It's actually better equipped

than many of those "nicer" vehicles.

For instance, there are overhead

camshafts, V-6 engine, the engine

is included, a four-speed independent

transmission, and the car has four

steering, to name just a few goodies.

Every generation, some smart

people figure out how to make basic

transportation at an affordable

price.

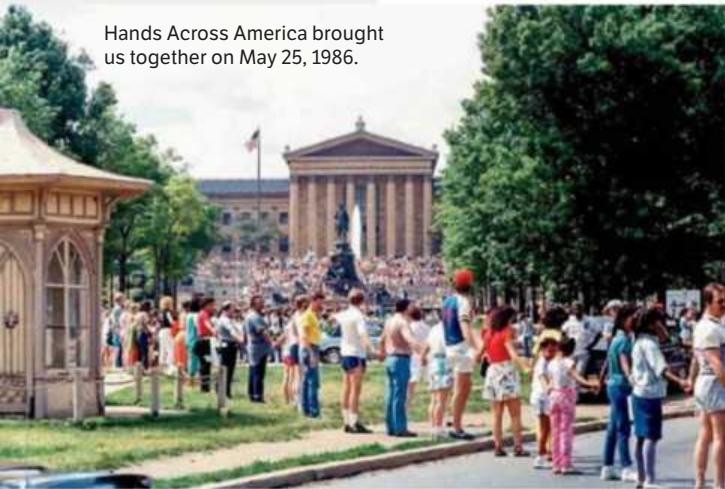
For all the other smart people

wherever to buy it.

THE ROAD BACK TO SANITY

*1986 MPG. SEE MPG. FOR YUGO 100. 4WD. DEALER PRICE. 1986 TOTAL SALES 10,000. THIS AND THAT.

FOR THE YUGO DEALER NEAREST YOU CALL 1-800-USA-YUGO

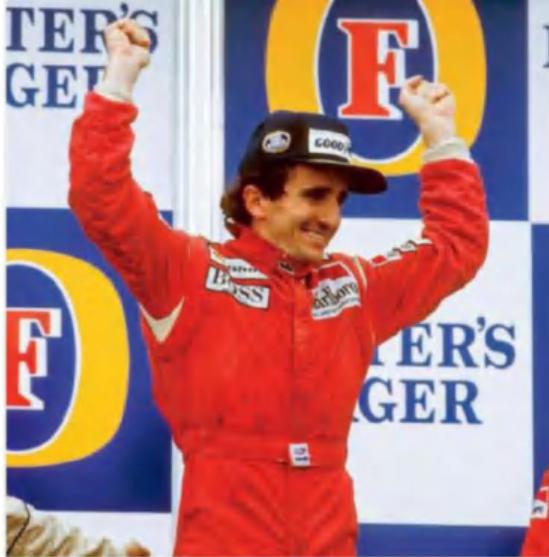
**BIGGEST
SCANDAL!**Accusations against Audi about sudden acceleration,
made on "60 Minutes" on Nov. 23, 1986 /Volkswagen diesel scandal, in which company engineers
are accused of writing computer code to allow cars to
pass emissions tests**DAVIS JR.**Hands Across America brought
us together on May 25, 1986.

"Bullshit!" I said. I was correct. Some of the most boring cars in the world make for the best stories, and we saw two of them in 1986: the launch of Yugo and the launch of Hyundai.

The Yugoslavian Yugo really wasn't too boring, as you had to predict A) what was about to break and B) when. In my first around-the-block drive in a Yugo, which had been painstakingly prepared by a dealer, I identified five problems. Not the sort of "problem" *Consumer Reports* finds, like "third upholstery stitch beneath left rear seat uneven," but problems like "turn signals don't work."

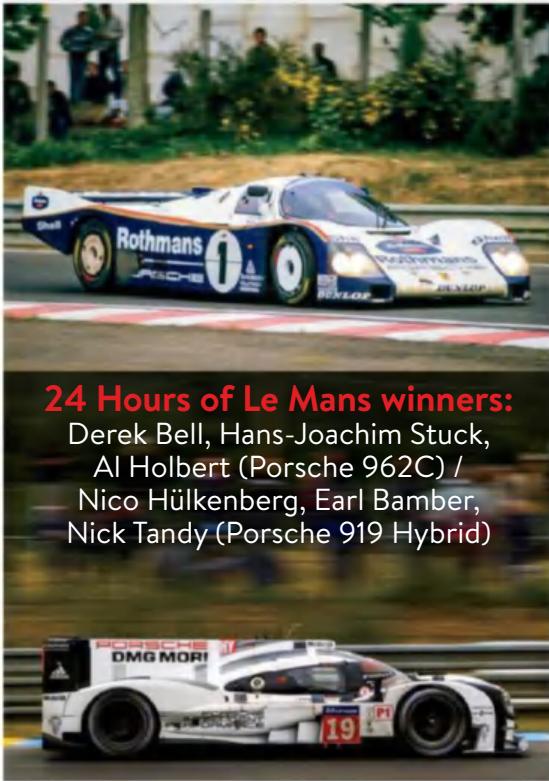
Yet importer Malcolm Bricklin was such a fascinating guy and told such great stories about doing business in Yugoslavia—what, we were supposed to ignore him and his crappy little car?

And Hyundai began importing its Mitsubishi-bred subcompact, which looked like a Mercedes-Benz next to the Yugo. Hyundai could have given Fiat rust lessons. But for \$3,995 for a Yugo and \$4,995 for a Hyundai Excel, can you tell me these were stories not worth reading? And I'm not even mentioning the brand-new Suzuki Samurai.



Motorsports 1986/2015:

Formula 1 champion: Alain Prost/Lewis Hamilton



24 Hours of Le Mans winners:

Derek Bell, Hans-Joachim Stuck, Al Holbert (Porsche 962C) / Nico Hülkenberg, Earl Bamber, Nick Tandy (Porsche 919 Hybrid)

NASCAR Cup Series champion:

Dale Earnhardt/Kyle Busch



IndyCar champion:

Bobby Rahal/Scott Dixon



ISUZU
IMPULSE
TURBO
FUN



David E. Davis Jr. and Jean Jennings got along, except when they didn't.

PROST, PORSCHE AT LE MANS, BUSCH, DIXON: LAT PHOTOGRAPHIC

So from the jump, the “No Boring Cars!” mantra was flawed. Most everything else, though, David E. and Jean got right. Davis could talk about shooting Weatherby shotguns and sipping Courvoisier and checking the time on his Patek Philippe and his coffee klatch with Enzo Ferrari without making you feel like Jethro Bodine.

Pompous as he could be—Gordon Baxter once called him the “stereotypical big-bellied, cuff-shooting bully”—in private, though, one of the things I liked about the almost painfully shy man was his genuine love for cars. All cars. That day in Dallas, as we walked to lunch, we both gazed at some comparatively insignificant boring-but-interesting little car, maybe an Isuzu Impulse Turbo with the Lotus package and Recaro seats. “Why am I still so drawn to shitboxes?” he muttered aloud.

Yet later that afternoon we visited a gallery that catered to automotive enthusiasts, loaded with expensive paintings of which

RAHAL: BOB HARMAYER; EARNHARDT: RACINGONE/ISC ARCHIVES/GETTY

ISUZU IMPULSE: JEFF KOCH/HEMMINGS MOTOR NEWS



Average prices 1986/early 2016:

Gallon of gasoline:

\$1.12/\$1.99

Gallon of whole milk:

\$2.12/\$2.25

Pack of cigarettes:

\$1.10/\$6.25

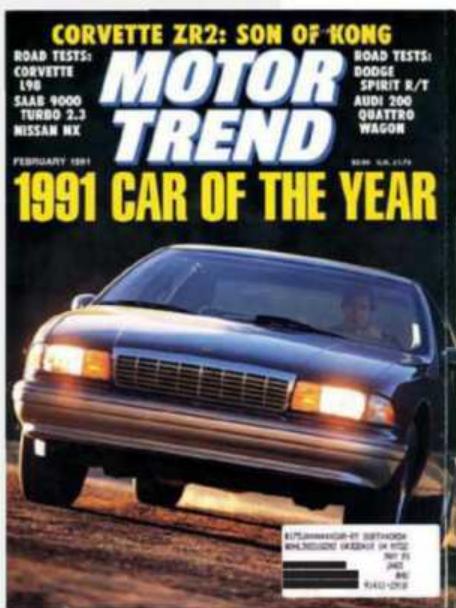
Median household income:

\$24,897/\$53,482*

(*2014, most recent)

30 minutes with escort in Las Vegas:

\$117/\$250



Davis likely would have never guessed Bob Lutz would switch to the dark side.

Motor Trend thought the '91 Caprice was great. *Automobile* disagreed.



Pop culture 1986/today:

Worst car movie:

Charlie Sheen's "The Wraith" (guys with names like Oggie, Skank, and Rughead race for pinks)/"Furious 7"

Biggest movie:

"Top Gun"/"Star Wars: The Force Awakens"

We were/are listening to:

"Addicted to Love" by Robert Palmer/"Hello" by Adele

On TV:

"Pee-wee's Playhouse"/"Family Guy"

We were/are reading:

"It" by Stephen King/Anything with "Grey" in the title

Auto exec Bob Lutz:

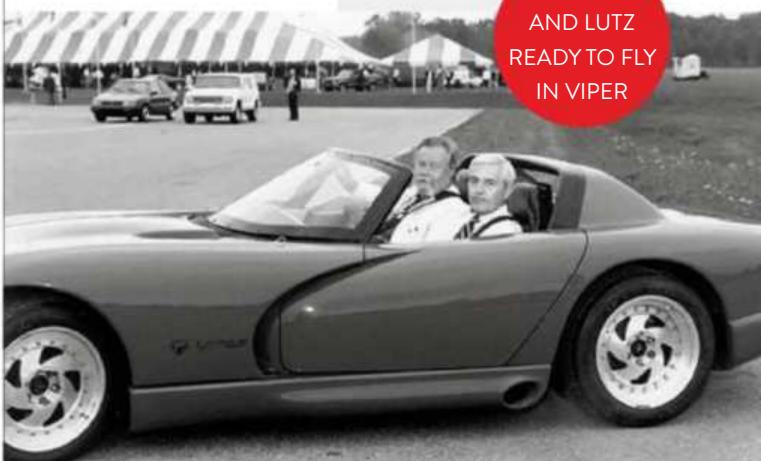
Hates automotive journalists/is one

Internet, social media:

Almost none/life-altering

DAVIS

AND LUTZ
READY TO FLY
IN VIPER



none were of Isuzus, and David E.'s surprise visit was received as though he was royalty. Which, in that world, he was.

Inevitably, I wrote for David E. a little, until in 1990 when I did a road test on the new 1991 Chevrolet Caprice, the overturned-bathtub-looking one, which I drove at Road America. In turn 12 it lost a wheel cover, which I suspect is still rolling somewhere in Canada. I wrote the Caprice was not that bad of a car, in that it had ABS, a nice V-8, and an automatic transmission with more than two speeds.

Later David E. was so incensed over my faint praise that he wrote a separate story using language you might have thought he'd reserve for the Yugo about how awful the new Caprice was, and I was so mortified I never submitted anything else. To his credit, when I'd see him, he always acted as if nothing happened.

To this day I decline to apologize, and I'm still looking for a nice Impala. ■

THE FUTURE OF MUSCLE



FUTURE MUSCLE



SMARTER, STRONGER, FASTER. THE 2016 CHARGER, VIPER AND CHALLENGER.



A G O D D E N E Y

fter thousands of images taken on hundreds of assignments, the idea of choosing my favorite image after all these years is daunting. I contributed to *Automobile* even before it was a magazine, when founding

editor David E. Davis Jr. asked me to help create a promotional road-trip piece by shooting a British sports car in Wales, the land of his ancestors. I can't quite remember why the car he chose for this was a Panther Kallista, a kind of horrifying Morgan Plus 4 replica with an aluminum body.

My most memorable picture, I think, is this 1955 Maserati 300S being admired by a young Italian woman with her bicycle. It was taken in a piazza in Brescia, Italy, shortly before my friend Mark Gillies (then *Automobile*'s executive editor) and I embarked with the car on the 2001 revival of the Mille Miglia. It ticks all the boxes for me, representing the kind of travel adventures I have photographed around the world for the magazine over the past 30 years, not to mention *Automobile*'s unique ethos.

This image combines a beautiful historic car, a location with the unique flavor of its surroundings, and a human perspective. Whether it involves action, a dramatic location, or a simple human moment, a car photograph should do more than just record the work of the designer and the craftspeople who created the machinery. This is why I try to have creative input when photographing cars.

Gillies' brief for this assignment was typically simple and straightforward, just like him. "I am driving a Maserati 300S on the Mille Miglia," he said. "Can you follow and shoot the story?" We decided it might be interesting to not only cover the 1,000-mile dash around Italy in the car but also incorporate an element of a 1950s road test, complete with driving impressions and photographs of the car's details. The plan was for me to chase the Maserati while riding in an Alfa 156 driven by an assistant.

After scrutineering in the center of Brescia where the Mille Miglia starts, Gillies and I took a break at an espresso bar, weary after dealing with the typically frantic tech inspectors. I began shooting some of the car's details while being crowded by *tifosi* who decided they simply must have a glimpse of the Maserati's gorgeous 3.0-liter inline-six engine. The light was just fading into that warm glow in which photographers revel when this signorina, who was cycling across the piazza, stopped to admire the classic parked on the city street like any Fiat 500 you might find in any Italian city.



Known for capturing memorable images of cars and rock stars, Martyn gets close to Debbie Harry in 1978. The Jam's 1977 "In the City" album cover is also his creation.

To see more of Martyn's work, go to www.rockpaperphoto.com/martyn-goddard. *Automobile* prints can be ordered at www.martyn-goddard.com.

By Martyn Goddard |



MY
FAVORITE
PHOTO

1955 MASERATI 300S: BRESCIA, ITALY, MAY 2001



At this point I would love to say I picked up my Canon EOS-1N camera and captured the shot in the style of a good street photographer. I actually dispatched my young Alfa driver across the street to chat her up and ask permission to take a couple pictures. She agreed and then afterward just pedaled away, probably thinking she imagined the whole thing.

The Mille Miglia started that evening in torrential rain, and I used napkins from a local café to try to keep my camera dry. The Maserati 300S departed with Gillies soaked to the skin. While my man David drove the Alfa 156, I plotted our route to locations that would illustrate a great car on a wonderful event. The results were published in the December 2001 issue as part of the story, "Trident True."

Except for one problem: My favorite photo didn't make the layout! Instead a simple vertical shot of the Maserati taken in the same location was used. Art directors! You just can't trust them. ■





30

By Jake Holmes |
Photos by Patrick M. Hoey and Guy Hermann

SONIC BOOMS

WE PUT EIGHT OF THE BEST CAR AUDIO SYSTEMS
TO THE TEST TO SEE WHICH DELIVERS THE BIGGEST BANG

FROM EIGHT-TRACK

players to Bluetooth, 10 watts to 1,000 or more, tinny tweeters to Kevlar-wound speakers, and ACDelco to Bowers & Wilkins, automakers' audio offerings have evolved impressively throughout the years. Your music library is now a just tap away in the cloud, ready to stream through digitally enhanced, amazing sound systems developed in conjunction with leading audio specialists.

For luxury brands especially, how you kick out your jams has become an ever bigger selling point. Cadillac partnered with Bose to create a system called Panaray (see page 68), which is set to make its debut in the new CT6. Lincoln is rolling out its new Revel system, as is Acura with its Krell setup. And, of course, the Bentleys and Benzes of the world have been in the high-end audio game for some time.

It's easy to be dazzled by gleaming speaker covers, massive wattage numbers, and other shiny details, but which sound systems really bring the noise? To help with our evaluation of eight of the premier offerings in the luxury segment, we enlisted Rob Sabin, editor-in-chief of sister publication *Sound & Vision*. With more than 25 years of experience in the audiovisual field, Sabin has a highly tuned ear and lots of sophisticated sound-measuring gear.

We began each test

parked in a garage with a real-time analyzer (RTA) iPad app and a calibrated microphone to measure how consistently each sound system reproduced various frequencies when we played a "pink noise" test track; generally the better the system, the flatter its response curve. A bass-test sweep tone allowed us to check how well the subwoofer managed low-end frequencies. Next, we played a variety of tracks from CDs (see sidebar, page 66) and listened for clarity across the full range of frequencies, natural reproduction of vocals and instruments, deep and impactful bass response, and the transient attack and "decay" of instrumental notes. Finally, we drove each car briefly to see how sound quality changed while on the move.

The best systems create an immersive audio experience. A quality system should produce a cohesive soundstage, meaning vocals and instruments are spread before the listener and positioned relative to one another. The system should avoid localizing sounds to individual speakers.

We ranked each system based on the evaluated criteria and our subjective observations. While the most expensive systems in the most expensive cars scored predictably well, there were some surprising sonic results.



For each system, *Sound & Vision*'s Rob Sabin uses a highly calibrated microphone and iPad app to measure frequency response and a sound level meter to assess background cabin noise.



Innovation
that excites

WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RECOGNITION.

For yet another year, our VQ engine continues to dominate the field. For this latest generation, the 300-horsepower 3.5L V6 that powers our new Maxima, we gave it a lighter, more efficient intake manifold and even equipped it with GT-R[®]-inspired sodium-filled exhaust valves. The result? It just placed on *Ward's 10 Best Engines*[®] list for the 15th time, making it the most celebrated engine in the award's history. Now back to work on making it even better.



Nissan's VQ engine has placed on *Ward's 10 Best Engines*[®] list more than any other engine

WARD'S
10 Best
Engines.



2016 FORD EXPLORER PLATINUM

SYSTEM: Sony premium audio system, 500 watts, 12 speakers

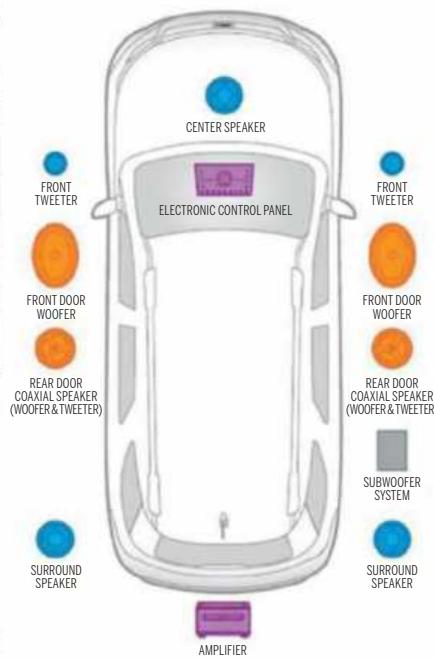
PRICE: Standard on Platinum trim

PROS: Smooth, unexaggerated sound in middle and high frequencies

CONS: Can't disable spatial processing; poor passenger sound experience



Sony designed unique volume and audio controls, mirrored on the company's home systems, to go with its upgraded sound systems.



Ford is Sony's only automotive partner; the system in the Explorer Platinum is its showcase setup. Designed with components used in its high-end home devices, the setup includes Clear Phase and Live Acoustics digital signal processing (DSP) software designed to clean up low-quality digital audio files and create the sensation of listening in a concert hall or studio.

Unfortunately, there's no way to turn off the spatial processing, and it results in unintended positioning of instruments and voices and adds artificial echo, especially with surround sound enabled. You also notice immediately from the front passenger seat

that vocals localize to the right A-pillar speaker, distracting during songs with a strong lead vocal. From every seat, the system lacks definition at the far ends of the frequency range. Worse yet, the front door panels rattle when major bass is present.

Sabin says: "While an uninitiated listener might find this system palatable and engaging, it was surprisingly flawed, lacking deep bass reach and dynamic impact. Add to this the poor soundstaging for front passengers, the veiled, muddled sound for the back-seat passengers, and an obvious and loud panel resonance at 60 hertz, and you're not left with a lot to like."



While not Bose's highest-end setup, the 13-speaker arrangement offered as standard equipment for the QX80 is a step above its garden-variety systems and offers a wide and lifelike soundstage. In the garage, the sound noticeably trailed off toward the high frequencies, requiring some help from the treble control to try to restore some of the missing sparkle.

The Bose Centerpoint surround feature seems to have a greater effect on the amount of reverb present and less on the physical location of sounds; it's overpowering in the intro to Pink Floyd's "Time" and makes Michael Ruff sound like he's "in an echo chamber," says Sabin. While this mode had no other glaring faults, it didn't sound natural.

Sabin says: "The system's overall character was darker, more veiled, and less open than the best systems. This was the only system where I immediately had to reach for the treble control in an attempt to get it to sound 'right,' and our RTA measurements did seem to show that the highs trailed off."

7

2015 INFINITI QX80

SYSTEM: Bose Premium Audio, 200 watts N/A*, 13 speakers
PRICE: Standard
PROS: Wide soundstage
CONS: Less detailed and veiled sonic signature

*COMPANY WOULD NOT DIVULGE.



SOUND



SYSTEM: Burmester Surround Sound, 590 watts, 13 speakers

PRICE: Standard

PROS: Flat frequency response; "cocoonlike" back-seat experience

CONS: Limited bass response; narrow soundstage

Years of experience and a bit of tech help Sabin evaluate the audio systems in our test cars, including the S550 and Lincoln MKX.

Benz's Burmester sound

system is impressive, with a healthy amount of power and ornate stainless-steel speaker covers. But sitting in the garage with eyes closed, we immediately notice a narrow, abridged soundstage for each front passenger. Vocals and centered instruments sound as though they're directly in front of each seat and relatively low in the car, and although accurately reproduced, tight vocals on tracks such as "Stand Me Up" seem a little unnaturally positioned. Still, the midrange is clean and detailed.

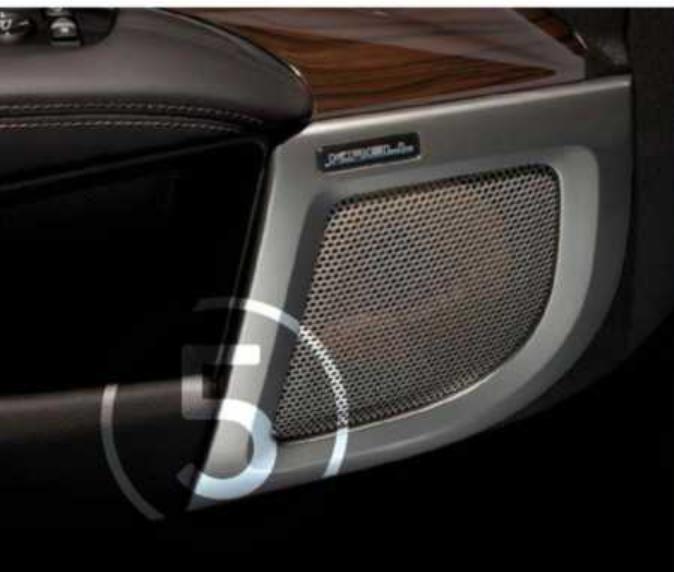
Highs and lows are a mixed bag. In "The Firebird Suite," there's a lack of decay and precision on a ringing triangle, and none of the boom on big bass hits

we heard in some other cars. The bass test reveals response drops off below 45 Hz, which partly explains why it lacks the low end impact. Moving the surround sound to "rear" mode dramatically improves the experience for back-seat passengers—important in a chauffeur-ready car such as the S-Class—and produces an almost cocoonlike wrap-around sound field for the power-reclining rear seats.

Sabin says: "A mostly neutral tonal balance and a nice level of detail. But the unusual handling of the soundstage, with its in-your-face presentation of vocals and its lower height that rarely lifted the soundstage above the top of the dashboard left me frustrated."

2015 MERCEDES-BENZ S550

2015 ACURA RLX HYBRID



SYSTEM: Krell Premium Audio, watts N/A*, 14 speakers
PRICE: Standard on Advance trim

PROS: Car is extremely quiet in electric mode; accurate, open reproduction; deep, tight bass

CONS: Easily localized tweeters; can sound strident on bright recordings

*COMPANY WOULD NOT DIVULGE.

Krell Industries'

optional system for the 2014 RLX marked the first time the audio specialist entered the automotive space. Krell says it was able to duplicate its home-theater performance in the RLX, with high-end parts such as lightweight magnesium-cone tweeters, Zylon "super-fiber"—a material used on race cars—for the six mid-bass speakers, and an amplifier with a claimed third less distortion than competitors.

Initial impressions were strong, with crisp sound reproduction and excellent high-frequency response. Turning on the DTS Neural surround-sound setting tends to offset a bit of high-end harshness evident on

some brighter tracks, but it's not well-suited to vocals. From either front seat, the system localized sound to the doors worse than any car we tested. And in the back seat with rear-seat mode enabled, the parcel-shelf speakers create a soundstage behind the passengers, as if you were facing away from the performance at a concert.

Sabin says: "One of the better systems we tried, with its primary flaw being the tendency for highs to localize distractingly to the door tweeters. That aside, it delivered deep and impactful bass down below 35 Hz and had superb and engaging timbre, clarity, and detail on instruments and voices."



SYSTEM: Bowers & Wilkins Premium Sound System, 1,400 watts, 19 speakers

PRICE: \$2,650

PROS: Nine-channel equalization; defined, strong bass

CONS: Echoing Concert Hall mode; no CD player

2016 VOLVO XC90



The XC90 features the

latest and greatest sound system from British company Bowers & Wilkins. Among the highlights: A dash-mounted center tweeter that aims sound directly at passengers to avoid windshield reflections, Kevlar midrange speakers, an open-air subwoofer mounted directly to the body for deeper bass, and a DSP sound mode that simulates a famous concert hall in Volvo's Swedish home. This XC90 came without a CD player, so we played music through the aux input via a high-end digital-audio converter plugged into the USB port of Sabin's laptop.

Though a cool party trick, Concert Hall mode just adds unnatural reverb.

But in either surround-sound mode or the regular stereo setting, the Bowers & Wilkins system is excellent. The vocals, piano, and snare drum of "Stand Me Up" sound as if they're floating above the dashboard, and the system delivers intense, realistic hits on heavy percussion tracks. For the complex "Welcome to the Machine," it separates the many sounds and effects without any harshness or edginess.

Sabin says: "Tonally neutral, good power reserves and dynamics, delivered a lot of fine detail in the music, and played loud without strain. With its nine-band equalization controls, it offered the highest degree of user tuning of any system—not that you'd really need it."



2015 BENTLEY MULSANNE SPEED

The most expensive car

predictably has the most expensive system. Developed by British company Naim, it tacks a whopping \$8,030 onto the Mulsanne's price. Because the Mulsanne will often be used for chauffeuring, we paid extra attention to the back-seat experience; one of the many DSP modes improves sound for rear passengers.

In the front seat, switching among the Audiophile, Balanced, or Driver DSP modes does more to relocate the sound sources than change the tone. There's an expansive soundstage on "Take the 'A Train," with cleanly replicated instruments. Bass response isn't the deepest of the group, but it still delivers powerful and impactful percussive hits."

Detailed midrange performance makes vocals natural, clear, and pure. Overall, it's a warm and lifelike musical experience.

The biggest problem is triggered by running a bass test tone, which made the parcel shelf resonate and rattle loudly from 100 down to 50 Hz, and this proves doubly annoying while listening to bass-heavy music. We attribute the flaw to the poor fit-and-finish of the trim piece, a letdown for an otherwise impressive system.

Sabin says: "A truly outstanding audiophile experience, with an awesome soundstage presentation, great transient impact, solid bass response, and mids and highs that were exceptionally open and clean."



SYSTEM: Naim for Bentley, 2,200 watts, 20 speakers

PRICE: \$8,030

PROS: Great rear-seat mode performance; clean, realistic sound

CONS: Bass depth a bit short of the best; resonance from parcel shelf

TOP OF THE POPS

To ensure we had the highest quality possible, we used original audio CDs in every car but the Volvo (which didn't have a CD player). Test tracks included the following:

BILL BERRY AND HIS ELLINGTON ALL-STARS—

"Take the 'A Train"

HOWARD HANSON—

"Symphony No. 2 Op. 30 'Romantic': 3rd Movement"

MICHAEL RUFF—

"Wishing Well"

"THE SHEFFIELD TRACK & DRUM RECORD"—

Track 6: Jim Keltner

AMANDA MARSHALL—

"The Gypsy"

MICAH SHEVELOFF—

"Stand Me Up"

PINK FLOYD—

"Time," "Money," "Welcome to the Machine," "Wish You Were Here"

JASON WEAVER—

"I Can't Stand the Pain"

JENNIFER WARNE—

"First We Take Manhattan"

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA—

Igor Stravinsky's "The Firebird Suite, VII. Finale"

PINK NOISE TEST TRACK—

An audio file that plays every frequency between 20 and 20,000 hertz equally, allowing audio engineers to measure frequency reproduction

FREQUENCY SWEEP—

1,000 to 20 hertz; a bass test tone that sweeps toward the lowest limit of human hearing to check subwoofer performance and panel resonance

2016 LINCOLN MKX BLACK LABEL

SYSTEM: Revel Ultima, watts N/A*, 19 speakers

PRICE: \$4,400 (part of Luxury package); standard on Black Label

PROS: Clear and accurate highs; lifelike bass and drum impacts

CONS: Slow-responding MyLincoln Touch interface; back-seat sound muffled

*COMPANY WOULD NOT DIVULGE.

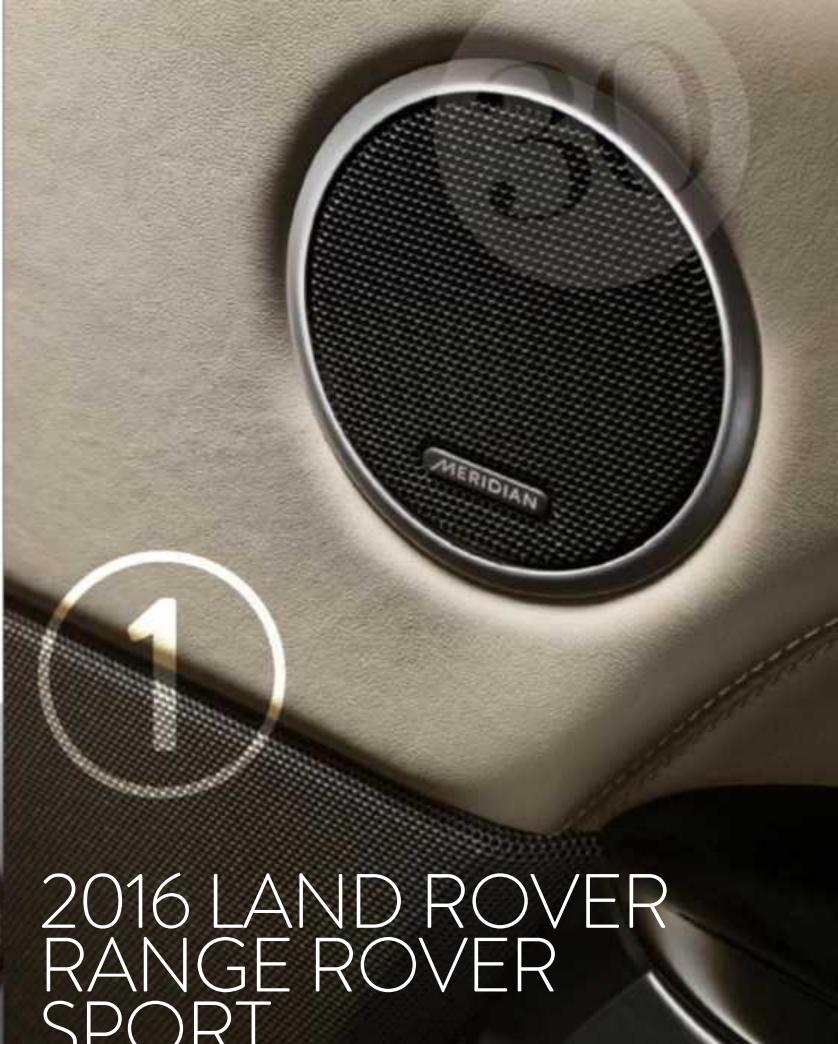


Lincoln is committed to use Revel audio systems for the next 10 years, with the first application in the MKX crossover. The top-spec, 19-speaker Ultima version is bundled as part of a \$4,400 Luxury package.

The Revel's soundstage is high and forward, right on the windshield, giving you a sense of sitting in front of the performers. The most telling track was the Jim Keltner drum solo. It was intense, as though you were in the same room as the drum kit. On jazz recordings, each instrument is defined clearly, with incredible levels of detail. There is no harshness or edginess, and precise,

detailed bass is easy to follow, even at highway speeds. Though we detected a few small panel resonances when running the bass test, nothing was noticeable when playing music. No matter what you play on the Revel Ultima, it sounds rich and immersive.

Sabin says: "It produced a huge and open soundstage above the dashboard, delivered percussion and drum thwacks with a solid leading edge and natural decay, and offered a very natural and neutral sonic balance with gobs of detail. It made everything sound great and revealed all the musical detail in a recording."



2016 LAND ROVER RANGE ROVER SPORT

SYSTEM: Meridian Signature Audio, 1,700 watts, 23 speakers

PRICE: \$3,250

PROS: Highly engaging with any music; powerful, deep bass below 30 Hz; great back-seat sound

CONS: Low frequency panel resonance around 40 Hz; cumbersome touchscreen interface

It takes just one song to become smitten with the Range Rover Sport's Meridian sound system. From Michael Ruff's guttural vocals to the cacophony of Pink Floyd's "Welcome to the Machine," the Meridian impresses on nearly every track, its 23 speakers creating an enormous soundstage to envelope the listener fully. Its 3-D DSP mode attempts to add a sensation of greater height to a recording, but it sounds best set to Meridian 2-D mode.

At highway speeds, the Meridian held up against road noise better than any other system, with clear and well-defined bass still

distinguishable at 75 mph, and the audio experience for back-seat passengers was among the best of any car tested, with a pleasant and accurate soundstage. Overall, the Revel was an extremely close second, but the Meridian was the system we wanted to listen to all day long.

Sabin says: "I was just so impressed with how natural it sounded all the time with seemingly all kinds of music, and it delivered everything in a wide, up-front, and very precise soundstage. We should all be so lucky to have a system in our home that sounds this good, never mind in a car."



HOW BOSE AND CADILLAC DEVELOPED THE CT6'S SPEAKER-LOADED PANARAY AUDIO SYSTEM

SOUND

ROAR OF 34

"I believed it would be possible to produce better sound in an automobile than in the home."

-Amar G. Bose, *Automobile*, November 1998

With tire roar, wind noise, and an engine rumbling in the background, you might think a car is a horrible environment to enjoy a high-end audio system. But back in the 1980s, Amar G. Bose—yes, that Bose—believed car interiors were better for accurate sound reproduction than, say, a living room.

In 1979 Bose approached General Motors about creating a sound system for a Cadillac Seville, developing a high-quality aural solution in just 90 days. GM soon approved production of the setup, which debuted in the '83 Seville. The \$895 option was a hefty expenditure for a car that cost less than \$22,000, but it proved that an automaker and a sound company could collaborate to deliver a factory system with better audio quality than many thought possible.

Bose and GM have been partners ever since, and now Bose is rolling out the most ambitious system it has

developed for the automaker, the all-new, 34-speaker Panaray, which debuts in the 2016 Cadillac CT6. Cadillac and Bose worked for the better part of four years to fully integrate Panaray into the CT6's interior design.

Any major project at Bose's Stow, Massachusetts, automotive lab starts with technicians modeling a sound system via computer before hacking apart an existing car and developing mounting brackets, speaker enclosures, wiring harnesses, and the like to create a demonstration audio system.

Listening to the concept car is the most important part of pitching an audio system to a car company, says engineering support manager Bud MacLellan: "I can show you anything on paper, but you don't know what that sounds like."

The first concept Bose presented to Cadillac for the CT6 had 49 speakers. While that got toned down to "just" 34 for the production car, it's still the most speakers Bose has ever installed in a car. (Its previous high, in the Maybach 57 and 62, was 21 speakers.)

Bose worked with Cadillac to get each speaker best situated, knowing the interior's design limitations. Two "bass box" subwoofers are integrated into the front floor pan, and the 10-inch woofer in the parcel shelf is offset from center so it will fit around the battery pack in the coming plug-in hybrid.

Speakers and electronics must be as small and light as possible, part of the reason why the Panaray system has multiple smaller speakers rather than a few big ones. The speakers on the dashboard and in front of the rear seats, as well as the A-pillar speakers, angle in different directions, which provides a wraparound effect and minimizes localization, an unwelcome effect whereby listeners can hear which speaker a sound originates from.

In addition, car audio systems must tolerate far more abuse than ones meant for your living room. During testing, speakers must play for 24 hours while being sprayed with water and withstand 100-g impacts (to simulate hitting a pothole or slamming a door). Adhesives must hold up against UV rays

that stream in through the windows. "The car is a pretty harsh environment," says Bose Automotive's Martin Dluzansky.

After all the physical parts were finished, engineers tuned the Panaray's electronic signal processing. They used microphones to measure sound reproduction at each of the car's seats, then programmed the amplifier to compensate for any deficiencies. Bose says its tuning process is so specific that it produces different maps for cars with cloth versus leather interiors and for when convertible tops are up or down.

The CT6's 34 speakers meant a more involved fine-tuning process. Joe McCabe, Bose Automotive's technical lead, recalls spending more than a month of 100-hour weeks programming the digital signal processing for the car before traveling to GM's Detroit-Hamtramck factory to double-check that everything sounded as intended prior to production.

Despite all the innovation and engineering involved, at only \$3,700 to start, the CT6's Panaray system will be priced reasonably compared to some of its closest rivals.

"We were literally trying to get perfection in all four seats," McCabe says. "When you've got 34 speakers and 19 equalizers, there's a lot of complexity."

LISTENING TO IT

While the CT6 wasn't available for our full car-audio test, we had a chance to listen to a prototype at Bose's office in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. It's a great experience, with pure and clear sound that wraps around the entire cabin. Deep bass has the booming, shake-the-seat feel of a movie theater; surround-sound effects seem to fly through the Cadillac's cabin. We'll have to get Sabin's expert ears to listen to the Panaray system for an official verdict, but our initial impressions of the CT6's system are very positive.—JH

THE ALL-NEW
PRIUS

CUT THROUGH EXPECTATIONS

Dramatic meets aerodynamic in the all-new 2016 Prius. Its sleek design turns heads, but is nearly invisible to wind, with a drag-reducing active grille shutter, a built-in spoiler, lowered hood and more, creating a quieter cabin, more stable drive and an air-cheating .24 drag coefficient. The result is mpg that doesn't just defy expectations, it shatters them.



Let's
Go
Places

Prototype shown with options. Production model may vary. ©2015 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.

FLYING

Bentley's attraction to the
Breitling Jet Team becomes
clear at 12,000 feet



SPURS

By Basem Wasef |
Photography by Evan Klein

04 . 2016 . 71





There's nothing casual about the Breitling Jet experience; aerobatic flights drip with ceremony and swagger. Below, the author, Basem Wasef, suits up for his ride in the L-39.



The L-39's short wingspan aids maneuverability. Tight flying formations are an added bonus.



The

thrill of the jet age came and went with a whoosh.

Just as swiftly as subsonic travel signaled the dawn of futurist glamour, its rose-colored promise slipped away, supplanting silvery, cloud-piercing dreams with the reality of cramped airliners and mass transportation.

Decades after the fall, I'm pinned to the seat of an Aero L-39 Albatros by six times my body weight, climbing 12,000 feet above Central California's sprawling vineyards on a clear autumn morning. The blood in my cranium wants to drain to my

extremities as the jet pulls a loop; when the needle-nosed aircraft finally settles back into a level, horizon-bound trajectory, six other L-39s maintain locked-in positions in my peripheral vision, two of them within an arm's reach of my plane's surprisingly short wingspan. They stay tight in formation for a breath, pilots and passengers so close you can see them blink, air brakes extending and retracting beneath the fuselages to fine-tune their speed in synchrony. After a few more moments of





level flight, a radio call from the lead aircraft summons each pilot, triggering the jets to fall away, one by one, into the sky like windblown leaves. As my pilot eventually peels away, the sun glints off the Pacific as the horizon skews, and we return to base to land. Despite, or perhaps because of, the g-forces, I'm buzzing on Jet A fuel like it's 1955.

Back on terra firma, blood re-ensconced in my cerebrum and land legs reacclimating, I mix with the pilots and ponder why a luxury automaker like Bentley has partnered with an aviation-entrenched

watchmaker like Breitling. The concept has become somewhat clearer—the majesty of precisely executed formation flying is a not-so-subtle reminder of the lure of military aviation, one so uniquely masculine and visceral it has the power to captivate virtually anyone with a pulse, let alone predisposed gearheads with a penchant for speed. But the differences between the shockingly spartan L-39 cockpit and the interior of virtually any Bentley make the connection blurrier, especially considering the British marque's unabashed poshness.

Apart from a shared focus on performance and engineering, the man/machine interface in a car couldn't be more starkly different from the man/machine interface in a plane. Objectively and mechanically speaking, there simply isn't much Venn diagram overlap between the 40-foot-long, turbofan-powered jet and the luxurious 626-horsepower, W-12-engined coupe. Unlike the Czech-built aircraft's stark cockpit, which incorporates an industrial aluminum instrument panel replete with Soviet-era gauges, the Bentley Continental GT Speed Breitling Jet Team Series



Team leader Jacques "Speedy" Bothelin's 11,000 hours in aircraft heightened his appreciation for cars such as the blue Flying Spur and the GT Speed, right.

Limited Edition—a mouthful of a car with a \$298,854.99 price tag—gilds the lily with a lavish elaboration on Bentley's so-called Mulliner spec trim. Quilted hide is stitched with a shock of yellow thread inside the posh interior, a theme carried outside with an exuberant rim of bright mustard around the ground-effects lip. The cabin's carbon-fiber trim is so elegantly matted and finished that it defies both extremes typically associated with the material—the race-ready functionality of lightweight construction, and the purposelessly ostentatious parading of the stuff. In contrast, the bare-bones jet interior is the stuff of pure function, armed for training duty with an oxygen mask, a slab of a seat, and a wraparound canopy designed to jettison if and when the VS-1 rocket-equipped ejector seat is triggered.

Driving the special edition GT—of which Bentley built only seven (all sold)—reveals oodles of seamless torque and a deliciously blatty, popping exhaust note. It heralds a coterie of decidedly badass qualities, vaguely materialist pride, and a sense of purposeful occasion, but is the Bentley that shares tarmac space with L-39s the sort of vehicle a fighter pilot would choose? Hoping for clues, I talk shop with several Breitling pilots about their emotional connections to terrestrial vehicles.

A quick survey of the Breitling jockeys' personal garages reveals more than a streak of motor oil in the blood. The four-wheeled possessions of this ragtag group of seven uncover a smattering of blue-chip auto enthusiast choices, among them a Lotus Elise S1, a Citroën DS 20, and a C5 Corvette. Interestingly, convertibles strike a particular chord, a point emphasized by team leader Jacques "Speedy" Bothelin, who counts an Audi A5 cabrio among his personal fleet. Bothelin, who lives in the French Alpine town of Val-d'Isère and hits the slopes in a Range Rover Sport, says open-air cars hold a special place in his heart.

"All I dreamed about when I was a kid was convertibles," he admits. "I drive the A5 in the summertime because I like the scent of the countryside and the feeling of the sun." This is an unexpected and curious streak of sensuality from the leader of the pack, a trait that carries through to the fact all seven pilots have a thing for motorcycles, with personal steeds ranging from a Yamaha R1 (Georges-Eric "Georgio" Castaing), a Harley-Davidson Heritage Softail (Bothelin), Ducati 916 and Honda CB750 (Bernard "Charbo" Charbonnel), and a 1977 Ural sidecar and 1935 Motobecane 350 Bloc S (Patrick "Gaston" Marchand).

But beyond their ground-based toys, the Jet Team has a deep affection for flying, so deep that some have been into aviation longer than they've been driving. When you piloted a glider at age 15 but couldn't get a driver's license till 18 (as did Bothelin), some destinies simply create themselves. All Breitling pilots have amassed thousands of hours of cockpit time over the years; Bothelin, who's been flying for more than four decades, has a staggering 11,000 under his belt. Left-outside wingman Marchand flies his Zlin 526 vintage aerobatic aircraft when he's not "working"; right-inside wingman Charbonnel calls no fewer than three World War II-era biplanes his own: a Bücker Bü 131 Jungmann, a Bücker Bü 133 Jungmeister, and a Stampe SV-4. When these guys aren't flying, they dream of flying.

Days after my flight, I give a follow-up call to further tap into Bothelin's mind and put a finger on what it is that ties these two worlds together.

"Maybe you will think I'm not honest in saying this," he tells me earnestly, "but the next car I'm going to buy will be a Bentley. I love this car." He goes on to say that more than a decade ago he flew a demonstration flight for the launch of the Continental GT and has been "dreaming of the car since."

What is it about the Flying B that captures Bothelin's imagination?





“WHEN I FINISH A WEEKEND OF FLYING, WHAT I WANT TO DRIVE IS SOMETHING
VERY QUIET WITH THE SMELL OF LEATHER AND A COMFORTABLE ATMOSPHERE.
THAT'S REALLY WHAT I LOOK FOR IN A CAR.”



30



Bothelin and the rest of the Breitling Jet Team will perform at various air shows in 2016. You can see the schedule at breitling-jet-team.com.



"I don't dream of four doors; I don't like them," he says. "Big Bentleys are luxurious, but they're not my style." OK, now we're getting somewhere—an opulent two-door grand tourer? Makes sense for a fighter pilot whose job description includes getting violently tossed around the sky. But when pressed about what draws him to the Continental, it turns out he's turned on by the traditionalist 12-cylinder configuration, not the lighter, nimbler V-8.

"I love it because of the noise of the engine," he admits with a disarming giggle. "It's very difficult for me to explain, but for me it's a big part of the perception

of the car." What appeals to him about the W-12 isn't sound volume or ferocity, he insists. "I don't like the aggressive sounds of race cars with no noise reduction," Bothelin says, though he also disapproves of the other extreme. "When we are inside a jet, whether it's an F-18 or an L-39, we don't hear anything. The sound of a jet is one of its weak points; the engine is behind you and the aircraft is pressurized, so the only thing you hear is the [HVAC and air circulation] system of the cockpit." The white noise of airflow becomes such an intrinsic part of the flight experience that when the system

once failed, Bothelin says he thought the plane had suffered an engine fault. And then there's the Bentley's intrinsic safe-as-houses feeling of comfort. "You've flown with our aircraft," he nudges. "You've seen it's not really what we would call comfortable. When I finish a weekend of flying air shows all over Europe, what I want to drive is something very quiet [and with] the smell of leather and a comfortable atmosphere. That's really what I look for in a car."

Stepping back and considering the broad implications of aerobatic jet flight, its obvious environmental anachronisms



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are easily obliterated by the dizzying thrill of moving through three-dimensional space. Just like a thirsty 12-cylinder mill propelling a 2.5-ton car, it's hard to regret the carbon footprint of burning 1,000 pounds of fuel per hour when your stomach is in your throat. Even if an L-39 trainer jet's 3,970 pounds of thrust and 565-mph top speed serve no other purpose than to demonstrate the seemingly impossible physics of military aerobatics, its mechanical extremism represents a level of velocity and maneuverability that remains unmatched by virtually any earthbound vehicle.

One more source offers a counter-argument to the jet connection: a friend with a healthy appetite for exotic cars, who happens to be one of the seven who snatched up the special edition Continental GT, granting him (and all such buyers) a flight experience with the Breitling Jet Team. Turns out the chance for a demo flight was not among his reasons for the purchase. If anything, he expected more stomach-churning maneuvers in the L-39 than he got, which seems fair enough since a more extreme demo flight with a civilian could have easily turned the cockpit into a centrifugal vomitorium.

All things considered, the promise of evocative performance draws the car manufacturer to the jet team, driven by the desire to transcend the glossy, superficial, and mundane, and enter into the realm of the authentic, the powerful, the unattainable. Even if demo flights don't scratch the surface of the aircraft's ultimate limits or maneuver violently enough to make a civilian feel like Tom Cruise in "Top Gun," the promise of exclusivity and the ideal of exceptional performance links these two brands together. After all, as any serious driver knows, nothing speaks to your body like g-force does. ■

DOES DRIVING MATTER?

DOES A WINDING ROAD INTO THE CLOUDS
OR AN EMPTY FREEWAY ON SUNDAY MORNING
MATTER IF THE CAR YOU'RE IN DOESN'T TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THE MOMENT?

DOES SAFETY, TECHNOLOGY, BEAUTY
OR EFFICIENCY MATTER IF A CAR DOESN'T FEEL
RIGHT IN YOUR HANDS?

IF YOU BUILD MAZDAS, DRIVING IS WHAT
MATTERS MOST.

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AND WHY EVERY MAZDA SHARES ITS DNA.

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A CAR COMPANY THAT WON'T BUILD
ANYTHING LESS.



mazda

DRIVING MATTERS* | 2016 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA

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Upshift

A

GTI AND MX-5 / FOUR SEASONS: BEST AND WORST
ACURA INTEGRA / AUCTIONS / P.J. O'ROURKE

Automobile

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

NOTHING



MAZDA'S MX-5 MIATA AND
VW'S GOLF GTI SATISFY US
AS MUCH TODAY AS THEY
DID DECADES AGO

COMPARES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA LAPALME

The sky is falling for car enthusiasts, or so the doomsayers would have you believe. There are plenty of warning signs. Tighter emissions laws are killing big-displacement engines; speed cameras and radar guns threaten our proclivity for driving quickly; fewer youngsters today learn to drive or even buy cars; and self-driving vehicles are real.

But it isn't time to panic just yet, because Mazda's MX-5 Miata and Volkswagen's Golf GTI are alive and better than ever. No other vehicles have exemplified our "No Boring Cars" mantra as consistently during the past three decades, earning spots as some of *Automobile*'s most-awarded, best-reviewed cars in our history.

Their story arcs are simple: Mazda wanted to revive the best parts of classic British roadsters, and the Miata became an enthusiast darling upon its 1989 debut for its responsive rear-wheel-drive chassis and top-down experience. The formula remains uncorrupted, with this version keeping the naturally aspirated engine, manual gearbox, and simple fabric roof that made us fall for the original.

Volkswagen's Golf GTI, born overseas decades ago, immigrated to the U.S. in 1983 as the Rabbit GTI. Other sport compacts we enjoy owe their legacy to the success of VW's innovative recipe: Take an ordinary family hatchback, make it sportier, and sell it at a reasonable price. Voilà, you have a car that does it all.

KEEPING THE FLAME

Built in 1957, Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca boasts a far more storied past than the Miata and GTI. Editor-in-chief Mike Floyd hops into the Four Seasons 2015 GTI fitted with the performance package upgrade, I grab the keys to our Four Seasons 2016 MX-5 Miata Club, flip open the top, and roll down the pit lane. The fourth-generation Miata retains all of the original's eagerness and charm. Its rev-happy engine jumps to attention and pulls harder than in any previous incarnation. Every millimeter of the tachometer gets a workout as the Mazda climbs up Rahal Straight toward the famous Corkscrew.

Upgraded Club suspension and Brembo brakes notwithstanding, this car isn't fast—as evidenced when senior editor Chris Nelson passes the Miata repeatedly in an Alfa Romeo 4C Spider. Yet I have so much fun on each lap that I don't care. The Miata is a darling playmate that never surprises me, no matter how clumsy my corner entries.

Meanwhile, back in the paddock, Floyd has only praise for the GTI.

"It's just great," he gushes. "It's fast, and you can even get a little drift going through Turn 3."

Lapping the GTI after a stint in the Miata is a night-and-day difference. There's much more torque available from its 2.0-liter turbocharged engine, and a tendency to understeer forces patience in slow corners. But just like the Mazda, the Volkswagen beats most in the smiles-generated department.

Call it track driving for dummies. The car chides rather than punishes when you accelerate too early or brake too late, shrieking its tires in warning but never getting out of sorts. The steering loads up to indicate what the front tires are doing, the manual transmission's throws are light enough for two-fingered shifting, and the brake pedal reassures with its heft.

Our on-track thrashing continues all afternoon, and neither engines nor brakes overheat. The durability impresses us: Capable as they are,



these are first and foremost road cars designed to take the long way home.

THE REAL WORLD

A day later, we follow a Monterey-to-Los Angeles route with as few straight lines as possible. Cars roll as daylight's first fingers stretch over the horizon, dashing down U.S. Highway 101 toward the sinewy Route 198 farther inland. Neither the Mazda



nor VW contorts us into uncomfortable seats, punishes us over bumps, or gives us tinnitus with droning engines. Everything just works. We drive all day long and emerge from cockpits unruffled, marveling at how much fun these cars provide on the deserted roads we encounter. During this particular flirtation we chased each other with the enthusiasm of Labrador puppies—



and because both cars communicate with their drivers so clearly at any speed, we didn't need to do 100 mph or even 70 mph to find thrills.

Other gold standards, including BMW's M3 and Porsche's 911, are beyond most drivers' budgets. Stalwarts such as Chevrolet's Corvette have struggled through occasional eras of malaise. But the Miata and GTI have never let us down. They force few compromises upon their owners. The Miata won hearts and minds by requiring just a fraction of the maintenance of high-strung European sports cars and by making long journeys easy with its supportive seats and fine ride. The GTI excels at everything, whether commuting, schlepping families, performing daylong road trips, or ripping through back roads with abandon. (To be fair, we concede that the GTI hasn't exactly been

Smiles at any speed. On the track or on the street, we just can't stop driving the Volkswagen GTI and Mazda MX-5 Miata.

2015 VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI S

WITH PERFORMANCE PACK

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$27,700/\$28,895
(base/as tested)

ENGINE: 2.0L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/
220 hp @ 4,500 rpm,
258 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual
LAYOUT: 4-door,
5-passenger,
front-engine,
FWD hatchback

EPA MILEAGE:

25/34 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

168 x 70.8 x 56.8 in

WHEELBASE:

103.6 in

WEIGHT:

3,031 lb

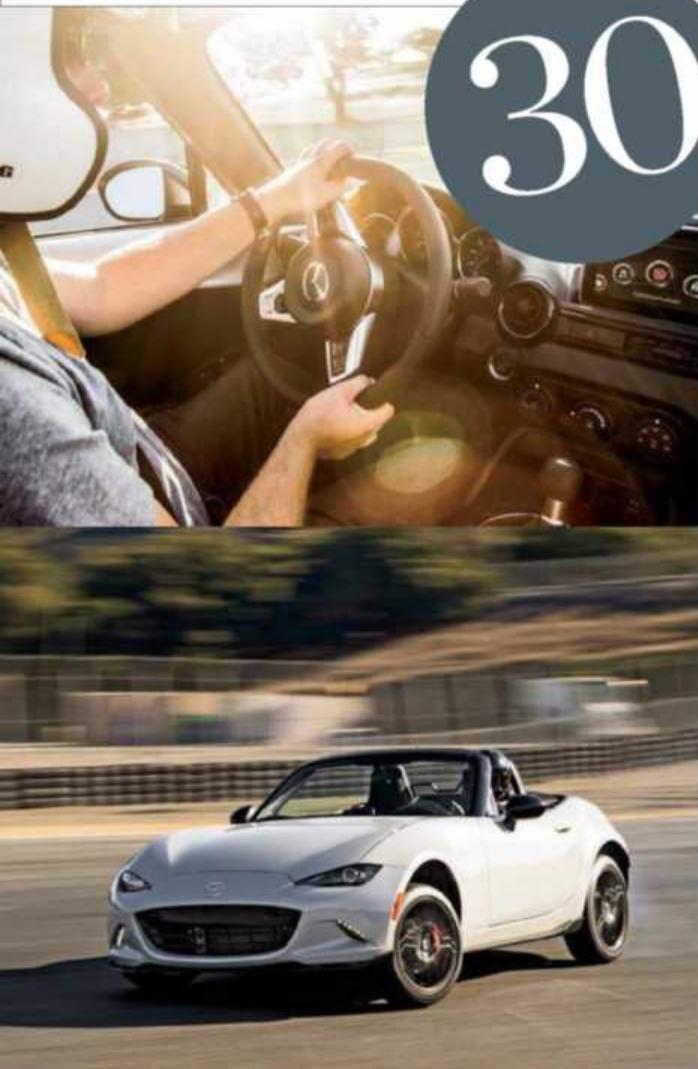
0-60 MPH:

5.8 sec

TOP SPEED:

155 mph

30



maintenance free for some owners.)

Certainly each has grown up over the decades: The Miata now offers navigation and blind-spot warnings, and the GTI's trip computer displays patronizing eco tips like, "Do not depress accelerator when stationary." In terms of practicality, these are easily the best GTI and Miata yet: safer, better-equipped, faster, roomier, and filled with more features than ever.

Still, the roadster and hot hatch entice as much now as they did so many years ago. We applaud them time and again for their essential goodness and back-to-basics fun. Those people who hate driving or speak with animated anticipation about the eventual arrival of fully autonomous vehicles? They haven't piloted a GTI or Miata. We'll savor driving them ourselves for as long as we can. ■

2016 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA CLUB

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$29,420/\$32,820
(base/as tested)

ENGINE:

2.0L
DOHC 16-valve I-4/
155 hp @ 6,000 rpm,
148 lb-ft @ 4,600 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual

LAYOUT:

2-door,
2-passenger,
front-engine,
RWD convertible

EPA MILEAGE:

27/34 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

154.1 x 68.3 x 48.8 in

WHEELBASE:

90.9 in

WEIGHT:

2,312 lb

0-60 MPH:

6.0 sec

TOP SPEED:

128 mph (est)

Years of Love

Automobile has showered the GTI and Miata with awards and glowing Four Seasons test reviews. A quick chronology:

December 1987: 1986 GTI scores 75/100

We said: "Our Four Seasons car did everything we asked of it, and we drive it flat out, all the time, on the worst roads and in the worst weather imaginable."

January 1990: Miata named inaugural Automobile of the Year

We said: "Considering what a minimalist exercise the Miata is supposed to be, it has a healthy veneer of quality laid into its various devices. ... All the same, the Miata is not pure frivolity; it's a seriously considered entity."

January 1991: 1990 Miata scores 90/100

We said: "The Miata may not have the most isolated ride, the strongest engine, or the most comfortable interior, but when judged as a whole, it is the most exciting automobile built in years."

1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997: Miata named Automobile All-Star

We said: "The driving experience in the Miata is still basic and vital."

—January 1992

"To our intense relief, Mazda has deliberately kept the Miata simple, resisting the inevitable temptation to make it longer, lower, and wider. So despite the passage of time, this roadster's unflappable character remains unaffected."

—February 1996

August 1999: Miata scores 4.5 out of 5 stars in a Four Seasons test

We said: "The Miata is so fun to drive you forget about the rough engine, the cramped interior, your migraine headache, and the overdue mortgage payment."

1999, 2001, 2002: Miata named Automobile All-Star

We said: "What makes the new car more remarkable still is that not one squib, jot, or tittle of design purity or fundamental engineering excellence has been lost." —February 1999

January 2007: GTI named Automobile of the Year

We said: "This GTI feels like it has more build quality than anything within miles of its price point. It exudes

substance in ways that worthy, sometimes faster speed machines from the Far East—the Subaru Impreza WRX, the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution, and the Mazdaspeed3, for instance—just don't."

2008, 2009: GTI named Automobile All-Star

We said: "The GTI eclipses even the class-clown Mini

Cooper for sheer spark and verve, it makes sense for real people who actually have to lead real lives, and it does it all without breaking the bank."

—January 2008

August 2008: GTI scores 4 stars in a Four Seasons test

We said: "You'd have a hard time matching the GTI's combination of useful packaging, cheerful personality, and outright speed at any price—and especially for less than \$27,000."

January 2010:

GTI named Automobile of the Year

We said: "The Volkswagen GTI

continues to burn the affordable-enthusiast-car flame like no other vehicle in the world. Because the new Mark 6 GTI, although only a mild update to the Mark 5 GTI, made a good thing even better."

2011, 2012, 2013:

GTI named Automobile All-Star

We said: "The enduring appeal stems from passionate performance, subtle restraint, and detailed execution. ... This is a vehicle that often feels like more than it is." —February 2011

May 2011: GTI scores 4.5 stars in Four Seasons test

We said: "Yes, this car has become more refined, more economical, and more reliable, but its underlying character is unchanged."

January 2015: GTI named Automobile All-Star

We said: "Above all, the 2015 Volkswagen Golf GTI makes us want to drive. ... The GTI is quick and rewarding on narrow two-lane roads, with urgent acceleration from the turbo-four, eager turn-in, and a planted feel no matter how pockmarked the pavement."

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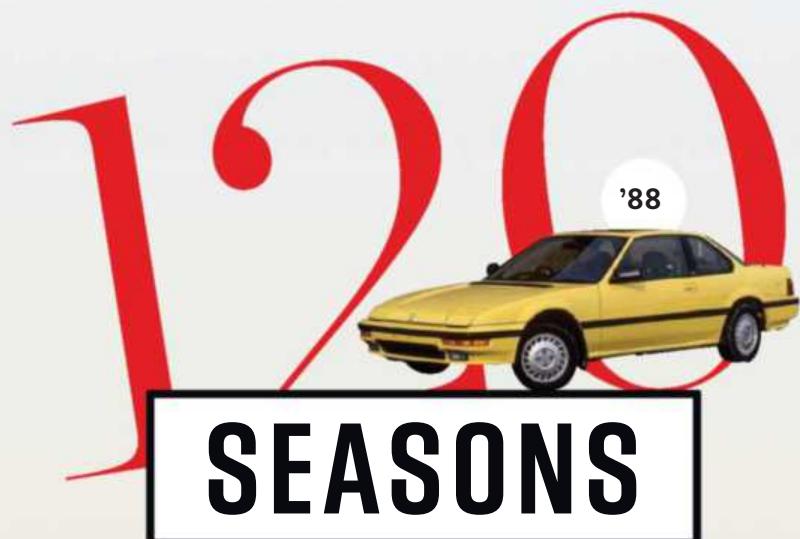


BRAKES



SUSPENSION





BEST

1988 HONDA PRELUDE SI 4WS

SCORE: 95/100

MAY 1989 ISSUE

Style, grace, and no bad habits.

Quotable: "Refined in the way that only Hondas are—especially for the money."

2000 BMW 323I

★★★★★

DECEMBER 2000

Like Mary Poppins: practically perfect in every way.

Quotable: "BMW is absolutely devoted to this magazine's core principle: no boring cars."

1989 SAAB 9000 TURBO

SCORE: 95/100

AUGUST 1990

Sweden's answer to the Millennium Falcon delivers 24,000 miles; almost Japanese in its harmonious uneventfulness.

Quotable: "Through rain, snow, or a mixture of both, the Swedish delight powered along—straight, strong, and comfortably quiet."

2002 SUBARU IMPREZA WRX WAGON

★★★★★

OCTOBER 2002

Reliable as it was entertaining.

Quotable: "What clinches its status as one of the performance bargains of this (or any) decade is the ability to cover twisty roads very fast, very safely, in all weather conditions."

1990 NISSAN 300ZX TURBO

★★★★★

FEBRUARY 1991

An automobile apparently endorsed by a higher authority.

Quotable: "The car is benign enough to let the memory of just how fast it is dwindle away during predominantly suburban use, so that when you swing the low nose back out onto an open road and let the reins out, there's a fresh surprise in its reminder."

2003 BMW M3

★★★★★

APRIL 2003

A year with our favorite car from BMW only made our hearts grow fonder.

Quotable: "The M3's brawny good looks, surprising luxury, unexpected practicality, and stupendous performance wowed our sometimes-jaded staff all year long."

1993 BMW 325IS

★★★★★

SEPTEMBER 1993

When you put car people in charge, you get the BMW 325is.

Quotable: "Brings a lift to every driving opportunity, long or short."

2012 AUDI A7

★★★★★

MARCH 2013

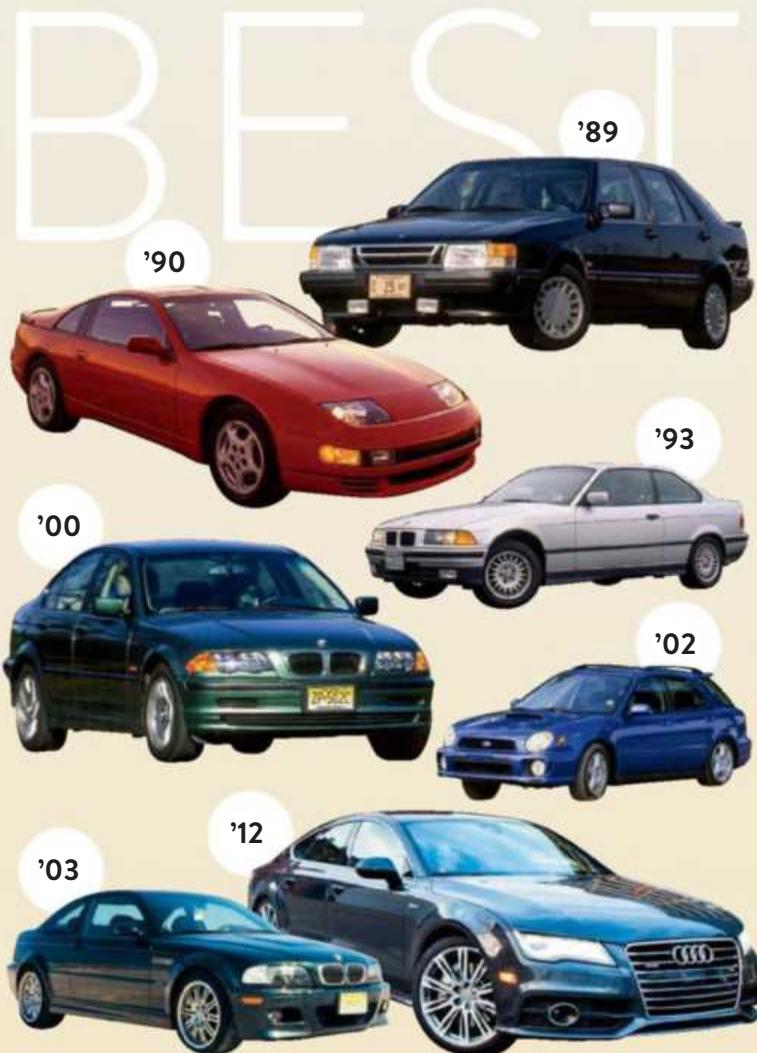
The culmination of everything Audi has promised.

Quotable: "We would have loved to keep the A7 for a full year—or longer—and regret that its time in our fleet ended abruptly." (See sidebar.)

30 Years of Long-Term Tests

Four Seasons testing dates to our first-ever issue, with the introduction of a Mercedes-Benz 300E. We've continued the tradition throughout the past 30 years, during which we've accumulated an encyclopedia's worth of experiences all over the

map, literally and figuratively. **The high- and lowlights:**



WORST

1993 SATURN SW2

★★★★★

AUGUST 1994

It's rather amazing that we managed to accumulate nearly 35,000 miles, considering how little we liked the car.

Quotable: "Twelve months: Are we there yet?"

1995 AUDI CABRIOLET

★★★☆☆

MARCH 1995

We like being seen in it; we just don't want to pay the bill.

Quotable: "Late in the game, Audi grasps the price-value concept. Now, if only the Cabriolet were a great driver, too."

1996 LAND ROVER DISCOVERY

★★★☆☆

AUGUST 1996

A sport-utility loaded with good ideas but crying out for better quality control.

Quotable: "It would be a worldbeater if it had the cargo and passenger space of a Ford Explorer and the month-in, month-out reliability of a Toyota 4Runner."

1998 OLDSMOBILE SILHOUETTE GLS

★★★★★

JUNE 1998

An A for effort and a C for execution.

Quotable: "We were unanimously disappointed by its lackluster build quality."

BY THE NUMBERS

Total number of Four Seasons cars:

246

Cars from brands that don't exist anymore:

18

Most mileage:

1992 Chevrolet Suburban, 44,000

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN

1991 TOYOTA MR2 TURBO:

We drive on a hilly unpaved road in the middle of an icy Michigan winter. The MR2 spins into a tree. We suggest chassis tuning played a part; we must apologize in a later column in which David E. reveals we ran the car with winter tires only at the rear, explicitly against Toyota's advice as well as our own policy.

1995 BMW M3:

Stolen while street-parked, against BMW's request, in New York City.

2005 PORSCHE BOXSTER S:

A motor gopher drives from Michigan to Los Angeles, crashing somewhere in the American Southwest. The soon-to-be-former gopher abandons the wreckage to seek cover from superiors' ensuing rage.

2012 AUDI A7:

Stolen while parked in a well-to-do suburban enclave in New York state. Test cut short with four months to go.

2012 MINI COOPER S COUNTRYMAN ALL4

★★★★★

DECEMBER 2012

A bigger Mini is fine, but it also needs to be a better Mini.

Quotable: "Logbook commenters debated whether the ride was akin to a hay wagon or an oxcart."

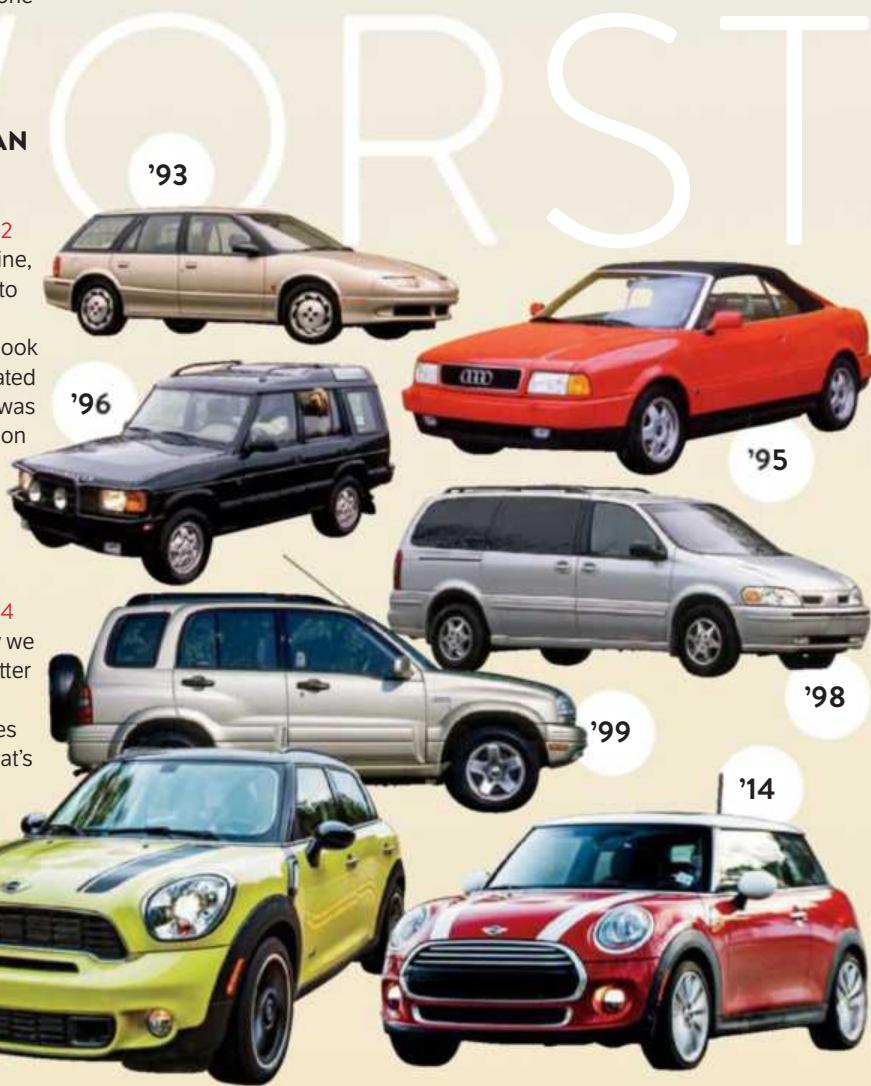
2014 MINI COOPER

★★★★★

DECEMBER 2014

No longer the toy we remember, for better and for worse.

Quotable: "Rattles like something that's just come out of warranty." ■



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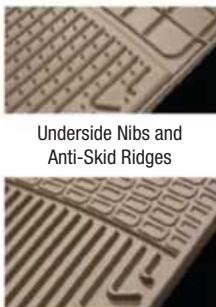
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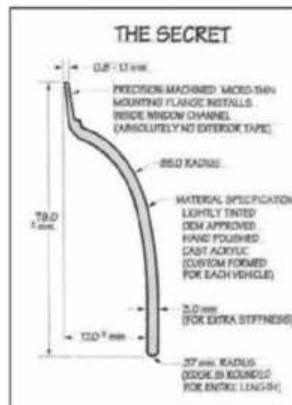
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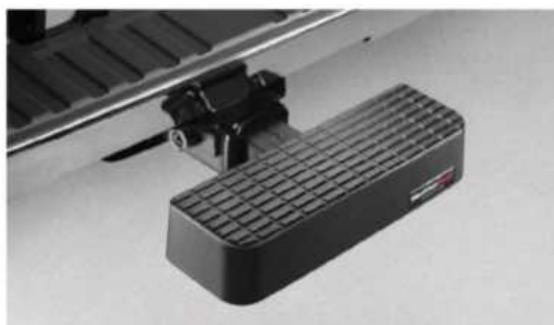
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1986-1989
ACURA INTEGRA

30

An appearance for grown-ups but a soul for street racers

I'

m sitting on a curb here in L.A. and eating a cheeseburger topped with pastrami as tough-looking

vatos cycle through the unmarked marijuana dispensary next door. Next to me is a two-door 1986 Acura Integra. When Jean Jennings (then Lindamood) got behind the wheel of a freshly minted version of this car for the first issue of *Automobile* back in 1986, she made it sound like a dream ride for cross-country motoring as she drove along picturesque California Highway 1. But today this Integra seems better suited to L.A.'s gritty cityscape, parked as it is between a sun-faded Tiburon and a clapped-out Tercel.

Some 30 years ago, our readers were dumbfounded by the idea of a Honda Civic wearing Euro-style clothes, a premium badge, and a price tag of about 10 grand. Though more handsome than the Civic, what with its flip-up headlights and a thin-pillar roof arcing rearward over a hatchback body, the Integra coupe was pretty plain in the usual Honda way. It also comes from a time when leather upholstery was for upscale cars only, so the interior of even this top-trim, \$10,593 LS model wears rat-fur fabric. (At least it's not 1970s-style vinyl.) And yet there are more than a few features that were über chic in the late 1980s, including a sunroof, power windows, cruise control, and an audio system with a cassette deck and a fully tunable equalizer.



Thoughtful design, though austere; luxurious leather was a distant dream.

To truly appreciate what made the front-wheel-drive Integra such a phenomenon on the streets of L.A. three decades ago, you need to pop the hood. You'll find a dual-overhead-cam, 16-valve inline-four engine instead of the SOHC 12-valve engine that was standard fare for the Honda Civic in the U.S. This fuel-injected, aluminum-block,

1.6-liter Integra engine weighed only 207 pounds and gave drivers 113 hp if they pushed it to its power peak at 6,250 rpm. Its 99 lb-ft of torque didn't top out until 5,500 rpm. Such high-strung performance was very much the character of all things Honda back then, and it was even more noticeable in those days before variable valve timing. Street racers would coax more power from this package with intake and exhaust modifications, though at the price of an even narrower powerband.

This particular Integra LS left its Acura dealership the day after the all-new 1986 Integra model went on sale on March 27, 1986. After reaching 168,000 miles, this car went to live in American Honda's museum near the corporate headquarters in Torrance, California. It's a little unhappy



THE INFO:

YEARS PRODUCED: 1985-1989
NUMBER SOLD: 217,455
ORIGINAL PRICE: \$9,298-\$13,900*
VALUE TODAY: \$2,000-\$2,350**

*NADA **NADA average
 NADA: National Auto Dealers Association

about being on the street today for my drive, as it started to overheat and lose power at a startlingly fast rate before I pulled over and bought a burger so the engine could have a few minutes to cool off. The potheads nod at me as they leave the dispensary, but no one seems to notice the squeaky clean Integra, which is both a measure of its very

This DOHC 16-valve engine gave Honda its street-fighting cred in the '80s.



WHY BUY?

Want an Acura Integra? Well, you'll find that Craigslist is overpopulated with them. Acura sold 794,197 examples of the Integra here in North America between 1986 and 2001 across three generations, and the first-generation cars of the 1980s have been pretty thoroughly used and abused by now. Truth to tell, the third-generation car offers 140 hp plus VTEC variable valve timing, not to mention way more style. And while our friends at Hagerty Insurance tell us that 1980s cars are indeed becoming collectible, even the very best example of a first-gen Integra rarely brings more than \$5,000. At this price, you could build it up with every sort of CRX Si performance part and still have plenty of money left for a cheeseburger. Don't expect to make money on one of these cars; simply enjoy driving it.



THE SPECS

THIS 1986 ACURA INTEGRA LS

ENGINE: 1.6L DOHC 16-valve I-4/113 hp, 99 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 5-speed manual
DRIVE: Front-wheel
FRONT SUSPENSION: Strut-type, torsion bars
REAR SUSPENSION: Torsion beam, coil springs
BRAKES F/R: Vented disc/disc
WEIGHT: 2,357 lb

plain styling and the 217,445 examples of coupe and sedan that reached American streets during this first-gen model's life.

I leave my informal luncheon stop in San Pedro and head toward nearby Long Beach, snaking along the small roads that connect boat docks and container ports. Every bit of the engine's torque is required to get this 2,357-pound package moving at a good clip. The engine builds speed smoothly and predictably, though it gets louder and more aggressive as the tachometer needle reaches for the 7,000-rpm redline. The standard five-speed manual transmission has a silky smooth shift action, and 60 mph comes up in about 10 seconds, which was quick then yet still slower than the lightweight, 110-hp VW GTI of that time.

The car feels lively on its short 96.5-inch wheelbase, and it's a joy to toss around. I pitch the Integra into a set of esses, and the rear end on its torsion-beam suspension skates out as I flick it left to right and back again. The steering is light but precise, while the short-travel, torsion-bar front suspension sends clear messages from the road surface. Nail the four-wheel disc brakes (a big deal in a small car during the 1980s), and the 195/60HR-14 Michelin MXV tires on cast-aluminum wheels do the job, as this is a fair amount of good rubber for the era. This lightweight car can pretend to be a hushed, premium-brand luxury conveyance, but it really wants to be a raucous sports coupe. It's a car that looks and feels grown-up, but is damn near impossible to be mature in.

As the Integra evolved into the too-sporty RSX in 2002 and then the too-luxury 2013 ILX, it lost much of its character. Or maybe all of us got too used to small cars modeled on the BMW 3 Series. For all that, the Integra established Honda's premium brand in America, and it's the car we wish we could buy at an Acura dealership today. ■



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Feature Car

1965 Ford Mustang

1986: \$15,600

2016: \$40,700



THE STORY BEHIND

30

YEARS OF RISING PRICES



Since Automobile was founded 30 years ago, the auction landscape for classic cars has changed dramatically. With a few exceptions, the auction companies, venues, and the most popular cars are different, and the buyers and sellers have changed as well. Perhaps the most important change is something you might not think about anymore: cable television.

Though auctions were a spectator sport even three decades ago, the broadcast of auctions has caused the collectible car market to explode. An auction is now reality TV, amped up with personalities, frenzied bidding, big money, and all kinds of bad behavior.

And here is something else to think about. The 1986 auctions were dominated by prewar

American and European classics, but this is no longer the case. Although there is still plenty of interest in pre-World War II cars from Bentley, Bugatti, Duesenberg, and Stutz, the headlines (as well as the big dollars) are now routinely grabbed by Ferrari, Lamborghini, Mercedes-Benz, and Porsche. These are exclusive brands, yet they have produced

enough cars so that more people can aspire to buying a collectible example at auction. In fact, an awful lot of cars that had yet to be built in 1986 are now staples of "classic car" auctions.

Of course, the prices have changed most of all. On June 27, 1986, Kruse International (now defunct) sold a 1931 Bugatti Royale Berline de Voyage. It went for \$6.5 million, and it was believed then to be the most

expensive car ever sold at auction. If this car were to change hands publicly today, we could expect the price to exceed \$30 million or perhaps even \$40 million. Back down to Earth, however. Let's take a look at some current offerings and contrast their sale prices with their approximate value 30 years ago, like this Ford Mustang convertible from Auctions America (above).



1965 Maserati 3500 GTI Sebring Series II
Sold at \$237,600

up on your driveway. Then again, back in 1986 it was just an obscure car from

S/N N/A
ROSSO CORDOBA OVER
white leather interior. 235-hp, DOHC 3.5-liter inline-six; five-speed manual transmission. A decent example from Auctions America's 2015 event in Hilton Head, South Carolina. It's had some rust repair in the past, so let's call this example a good driver.

The Maserati Sebring isn't an A-list car, but you certainly wouldn't turn one down if it ended

a forlorn Italian brand then better known for building the crappy Chrysler TC by Maserati. If you happened to be at the Barrett-Jackson sale in Scottsdale back then, you might have raised your bidding paddle at the nice Maserati 3500 Series II that sold for \$13,500. And it should have left you with \$220,000 in gross profit from an auction today. Moral: Never underestimate the value of a classic brand.



1956 Porsche 356A 1600 Speedster
Sold at \$330,000

importer Max Hoffman asked the factory to produce to help bring down the price. It wasn't hard to find a Speedster at auction in 1986. Barrett-Jackson in Scottsdale had a 1957 that sold with an incorrect interior at \$13,750, while the Bay Cities Auction in Fremont, California, had a nicer one that sold for \$17,750. We found four more on offer in 1986, and none topped \$17,750. Sherman, set the Wayback Machine. Never mind the current price escalation of the 911; it's a 356 that you want.

S/N 82298
WHITE WITH BLACK CLOTH
top over red leather interior. 60-hp, OHV 1.6-liter flat-four; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at RM Sotheby's event in Monterey, California, on August 13, 2015. An extremely nice example with excellent paint and all details. Has a Porsche Certificate of Authenticity. A Porsche Speedster was meant to be pure simplicity, a stripped-down version of the 356 that U.S.

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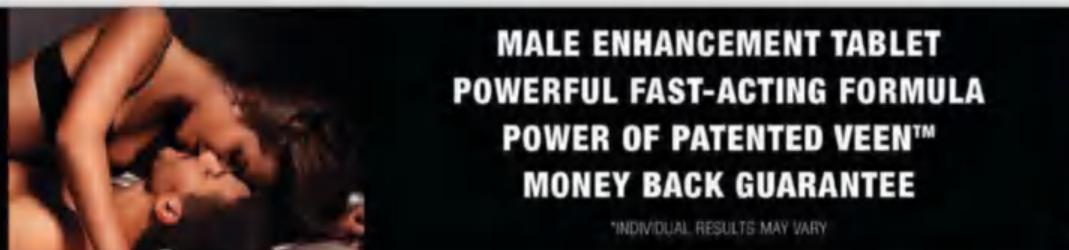
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1955 Mercedes-Benz
300SL "Gullwing"
Sold at \$1,650,000



1962 Ferrari 250 GT
SWB Berlinetta Speciale
Sold at \$16,500,000



1963 Jaguar E-type
Series I Roadster
Sold at \$112,750



1963 Chevrolet Corvette
"Split Window"
Sold at \$159,300

S/N 198.040.5500628

RED OVER BLACK LEATHER

interior. 220-hp, SOHC 3.0-liter inline-six; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at Gooding & Co. at Pebble Beach, California, on August 15-16, 2015. A very well-known Gullwing that retained its one-owner status (purchased for \$9,300 in 1955) until 2003. It sports a wood-rim Nardi steering wheel and knock-off Rudge wheels.

At least 25 examples of the 300SL Gullwing came to auction in 1986, and not all of them sold. We found one in just fair shape that went for \$46,000. Barrett-Jackson in Scottsdale had a very nice car that tipped the scales at \$90,000, and you can bet everyone in the room thought the buyer paid too much. Nevertheless, the buyer could have spent double that making it perfect and still walked home from an auction this year with a cool million in his pocket.

S/N 3269 GT

DARK BLUE OVER RED

leather interior. 240-hp, SOHC 3.0-liter V-12; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at Gooding & Co. at Pebble Beach, California, on August 15-16, 2015. With a custom body by Bertone and a wonderful history, this car sold for maybe a couple million more than a standard 250 GT SWB.

You can go a few years between sales of a 250 GT SWB because Ferrari made only 90 production cars. If you were there for Barrett-Jackson at the old Phoenix Municipal Stadium on January 25, 1986, you might have come home with your own SWB. Described as in excellent condition, it brought a whopping \$100,000. For argument's sake, let's call this a \$12 million car in 2016. (Note: File this one under the heading "Spouse Convincer" for the next time you're shopping for a collectible car.)

S/N 879718

PRIMROSE YELLOW OVER

tan leather interior. 265-hp, DOHC 3.8-liter inline-six; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at Bonhams in Scottsdale, Arizona, on January 15, 2015. Let's call this a driver's condition car with a relatively recent restoration, and we'll let everyone chill about its could-haves and should-haves. Fantastic E-types from this era can sell for up to \$150,000.

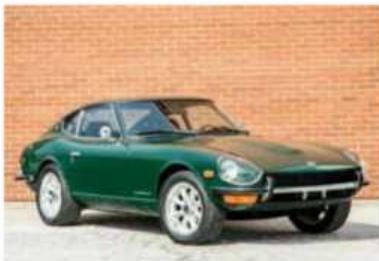
No surprise that plenty of E-types were for sale at auction in 1986. Kruse offered a 1964 E-type in Oklahoma City that garnered a high bid of \$12,500 against a \$15,000 reserve (no sale). Had you paid the \$15,000 in 1986, driven your car occasionally, and kept it maintained, there is no reason to think there wouldn't have been some money left over if you were to sell it in 2016. Take that, you sanctimonious money managers.

S/N N/A

TUXEDO BLACK OVER

black vinyl interior. 340-hp, OHV 327-cubic-inch V-8; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at Mecum in Kissimmee, Florida, on January 24, 2015. This very rare example of the "split window" coupe is among the best of the best. It brought deservedly high money despite no fuel injection or luxury equipment.

We found five '63 Corvette coupes that sold at auction in 1986, and the cheapest went for \$10,000. The most expensive one came from Barrett-Jackson in Scottsdale. It brought \$11,700 and was described as no cream puff. As with many cars at auction these days, full documentation and awards from clubs or authenticators such as the National Corvette Restorers Society are needed to bring the biggest of the big bucks, but the money is there if the car is good.



1971 Datsun
240Z Coupe
Sold at \$25,300

in the United States.

In 1986 the standard mantra among car

collectors was something along the lines of, "There never will be collector cars from Japan. Japanese cars have no soul." How's that "no collector cars from Japan" working for you now? We found two 1971 Z-cars that crossed the block in 1986, one for \$2,150 and one for \$2,200. Let's face it, dollars in such amounts are what we spend on a bad cruise-ship holiday these days. The Datsun is still a better deal.



1932 Stutz DV-32
Super Bearcat
Sold at \$1,012,000

Still a sensational American sports car today, but back in 1986, car

collectors wondered if a Depression-era Stutz would hold its value because its primary owner body was aging rapidly. A Weymann-bodied car was sold from the Harrah Collection in Reno, Nevada, at an auction held June 27-29, 1986. Even though it was described as in fair condition, it still brought \$120,000. In 2016, you might apply the words "untouched original." As times change, so does the collector car hobby.

S/N N/A

RACING GREEN OVER black vinyl and black cloth interior. 151-hp, SOHC 2.4-liter inline-six; four-speed manual transmission. As seen at Auctions America in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, on March 27, 2015. A nicely presented car with some modifications that are easy to fix, such as incorrect wheels and headlight covers. Signed by the late, beloved Yutaka Katayama (aka "Mr. K"), Datsun's miracle man

S/N DV SB 1486

BLUE GRAY WITH BLACK

fenders and tan canvas top over tan leather interior. 156-hp, DOHC 322-cubic-inch inline-eight; three-speed manual transmission. As seen at Bonhams on Amelia Island, Florida, on March 12, 2015. A stunningly original car in most respects, this Stutz has been preserved rather than restored. Coachbuilder Weymann was famous for its fabric bodies.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

CARS I LOVE



P.J. O'Rourke began writing about cars in 1977 for *Car and Driver*. He followed founding editor David E. Davis Jr. to *Automobile* and wrote frequently for the magazine from its inception in 1986 until the early 2000s. O'Rourke is the author of 17 books, including one devoted to vehicular misadventures, "Driving Like Crazy," and most recently a collection, "Thrown Under the Omnibus."

THERE'S NO NEW CAR I WANT.

And I was born to love cars. The O'Rourkes have been in the car business almost as long as the Fords. In 1902 my grandfather J.J. was a buggy mechanic watching Barney Oldfield race "999." Grampa became a horseless buggy mechanic, then a salesman, then a dealer.

Five generations of O'Rourkes have built, sold, written about, and tinkered with cars. But when I open a new car's hood there's nothing to tinker with.

I might as well pry the back off a giant, rolling iPhone.

My wife has a BMW 3 Series wagon. I tried to check the oil. I looked everywhere in that cryptic, mystifying, seemingly machinery-free engine compartment. I couldn't find the dipstick because (I went to extremes to learn this) I was forced to employ the shade-tree mechanic's last resort. I read the owner's manual.) there is no dipstick. The manual, by the way, is organized on the same principles as the federal tax code, but it's longer and translated from German in Taiwan.

To find out if the BMW's oil is low or dirty or, for that matter, on fire, you wait for the BMW to send its dashboard a text message—checking the oil via Twitter.

My love for cars has been fading for a long time. Forty years ago cars began letting me know if I left the lights on, the door open, the keys in the ignition, or if I failed to fasten my seat belt. I have a wife, a mother-in-law, and a teenage daughter. When I want nagging I know where to go.

Then came 5-mph bumpers making the Mercedes 450 SL of my dreams look as if it had visited a Ubangi beauty parlor. And the catalytic converter on a Buick Grand National I was test driving set fire to the pile of leaves at my curb.

Now I hate cars.

I hate that I can't fix them. I hate that I don't need to fix them. Love means wanting to be involved. I have a wife, a mother-in-law, and a teenage daughter. When I want to feel unneeded I know where to go.

The steady, implacable reliability of new cars is sinister, like the IRS enforcement of the federal tax code that inspired the BMW owner's manual.

The steady, implacable handling of a new car is sinister, too. I hate full-time AWD and all-season tires.

Cars used to let you know when they were out of control. (Which, above 60 mph, they usually were.) Now people think they can drive at any speed in any condition. Moms in tot-filled SUVs treat 6 inches of slush on the freeway like A.J. Foyt treated the strip of bricks at Indy.

But I also hate safety. Is that a Takata airbag? Even if it isn't, the Goodyear blimp could instantly inflate in my face—just when I'm smoking a cigar.

I hate the way new cars look— aerodynamically correct blobs of phlegm spit out by computers at the command of Hello Kitty draftsmen.

I hate the new car smell—there isn't any. It's been replaced by climate control so complex that my daughter is taking a sauna in the back, my wife is experiencing hypothermia in the front, and my butt's on fire because I've accidentally tripped the heated seat switch located who knows where. Roll up the window if you're too cold. Not that you can "roll" any car's window. It's electric.

I hate electric cars. They run on batteries. My house is full of devices that run on batteries. What is every one of those batteries? Dead.

Now I hear of driverless cars. Next, eaterless meals.

Damn the computers. And not just the one that sends Facebook postings to the BMW dashboard about cute stuff the oil is doing. Computers determine fuel mixture, exhaust emissions, suspension settings, braking, shifting, steering—and me. Cars have artificial intelligence. They're smarter than I am.

Not hard. But letting something you're supposed to operate be smarter than the operator is dangerous. That's how Bernie Madoff happened. Bernie was smarter than the people making investments with Bernie. He was so much smarter that he began to hatch evil genius schemes.

There's no new car I want. If a UPS box filled with a free \$845,000 Porsche 918 Spyder was delivered to my garage door today, I'd sell it and buy 84½ 1960 MGAs in fair condition.

I used to have a 1960 MGA in fair condition. I could fix it. I needed to. It wouldn't go 25 miles without something busting or falling off. But when the MGA quit, at least it was just sitting there by the side of the road doing nothing. It wasn't hatching evil genius schemes.

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